

**THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE
AMONG RURAL PEOPLE**

BY
KENYON L. BUTTERFIELD

**THE COLE LECTURES FOR
1932 DELIVERED BEFORE
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**

**NASHVILLE
COKESBURY PRESS**

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE AMONG
RURAL PEOPLE. COPYRIGHT.
MCMXXXIII, BY WHITMORE & SMITH

All rights reserved, including that of translation
into foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

DESIGNED, SET UP, ELECTROPLATED, PRINTED, AND
BOUND BY THE PARTHENON PRESS AT NASHVILLE
TENNESSEE, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| I. THE RURAL BILLION..... | 7 |
| II. RELIGION AND RECONSTRUCTION..... | 38 |
| III. THE AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH | 72 |
| IV. THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH..... | 121 |
| V. EAST AND WEST TOGETHER..... | 160 |
| VI. THE CHURCH IN COMMAND..... | 190 |
| POSTSCRIPT | 232 |



THE RURAL BILLION

A FEW MONTHS AGO, AN ODD LITTLE FIGURE OF A man, clad in a loin cloth and a cotton shawl, eating scarcely more than dried fruits, and drinking the milk of the goat, sat in counsel with the potent leaders of the proud commonwealth "on which the sun never sets." He was there by right of a greater personal influence over a larger number of human beings than that of any other living man.

Whence the power of Gandhi? Doubtless in part because more than any other public character of our time, unless it be Kagawa, the remarkable Christian leader of Japan, Gandhi takes literally the Sermon on the Mount and seeks to apply its teachings to practical affairs. Again, while he represents a movement led by some of the most subtle minds in the world, many of them radical and irreconcilable political agitators, his

own strength in London lay also in the fact that he has caught the imagination and indeed has become the saint of the three hundred million villagers of India.

These masses, an amazing proportion of whom are in bondage to poverty, debt, disease, dirt, illiteracy, superstition, overpopulation, have endured a status assigned to them by fate—so they have been taught and so they have believed. They are beginning to hope for some measure of release from their practical serfdom. Like the Hebrews of old, they feel they may have found a Moses to lead them into a land of promise. Gandhi at least voices the new-born longings of the underprivileged, heretofore inarticulate. While the sad state of the Indian village masses will yield to no simple and easy formula like spinning and weaving, Gandhi nevertheless has helped to lay bare an abiding issue of the first magnitude among the present welter of world problems.

For it is not India alone, nor only the present political ferment in that country, that reveals an issue that has been all too much hidden beneath other interests. There is a world-wide agricultural depression which may be regarded as part of the general economic illness of the world. But there are also unmistakable signs of a rising tide of deep unrest among farmers, so portentous as to make a prophecy of revolution no wild exclamation of alarm. In all the continents the rural people are realizing their plight and are no longer willing to be its victims.

It is increasingly believed that we are in the birth-pangs of a new era. A world-wide revolution is apparently in process. This revolution is seen in the area of thought, of ideas about the material universe and the opinions of mankind concerning themselves. It reveals itself in sharp changes in the views and habits of the multitude. Its most obvious features are in the realm of the economic status and political power of the urban masses. Because modern industry is in itself and in its results a revolution, the workers who live in cities where industry and its sisters, commerce and finance, have their abiding place, form the material of change. As a consequence, the social revolution is primarily an urban movement.

However, we are also at the threshold of a rural revolution. The people of the land, who constitute a major share of the world's population, are arousing to the call for a readjustment of human relationships. These people live apart from the cities yet have industrial and social problems quite as pressing as those of the city masses, though in many respects different in form and certainly different in possible methods of solution. The reconstruction of the rural social order is a distinctive world-issue.

The Christian enterprise is slowly becoming conscious that the social as well as the intellectual phases of the sharp changes that are under way are the greatest challenge it has had to meet in recent times, perhaps in all the centuries since its acceptance by the Roman

Empire. But the church too has sensed the urban and the industrial more acutely than it has the rural character of this challenge. Indeed, the church is almost exclusively urban-minded with respect to its crucial problems.

For Christian people there are good reasons for an interest in a problem which has gained added importance because of a widespread agrarian unrest so pronounced as to have been called "The Green Rising." We begin to sense the bearing upon civilization of the fate of these vast populations living on the land under tragically untoward conditions. We are compelled to ask whether Christianity has an effectual message for these masses, a message adequate both for their inner lives and for removing or at least mitigating their more serious social handicaps, that they may have the minimum economic and spiritual requirements of normal human beings.

To those who call themselves Christians it seems inconceivable that an adequate rural civilization can be built on any other foundation than the rock of Christian teaching. However that may be, let there be no mistake about the fact that if the Christian enterprise does not concern itself with these multitudes of rural people, or if it lacks power to direct the rising tides of social revolt among them, the Christian church will have a place of insignificant influence or value in the rural civilization of the future.

The purpose of these lectures is to try to map some

THE RURAL BILLION

of the more salient features of this new demand upon Christian forces throughout the rural world. There will be no attempt at a thorough analysis of the rural problem although we cannot ignore some of its more prominent aspects. This discussion will not cover fully the many-sided readjustments in purposes and activities that the church must undergo if it proves equal to the new call. We shall merely enter upon an exploration, not too detailed nor evenly balanced, in an effort to discover the deep significance, both for humanity and for the Church itself, of the slowly rising but eventually certain demand that the Christian enterprise shall project itself into the oncoming movement for revolutionary change among the "folk of the furrow." The objective is a practical one.

Let us proceed then to set forth the more important aspects of the issue thus raised, which may be restated in the question, What is the place of the Christian enterprise in the building of an adequate rural civilization? The lecturer has deep convictions about the necessity of an answer to this query, a firm belief in the imperative need of intelligent and sympathetic attention to the world's rural problem, and an abiding faith in the power of the essential religion of Jesus as the only effectual solvent of the world's woes. These views have emerged from years of contact with American rural questions and farm people and have been strengthened by recent wide travels among the village masses of the Orient.

ARE FARMERS WORTH WHILE?

Of course farmers are worth while! Do they not produce our food and our cotton and our silk? Have they not been the source of much of our best citizenship and leadership? Are they not a rock of safe conservatism in times when radicals seek to disrupt the established order? Are they not needed, as the Roosevelt Country Life Commission so well said, "to supply the city and metropolis with fresh blood, clean bodies, and clear brains that can endure the strain of modern urban life"?

But unfortunately fine sentiments not fulfilled in action are more subversive of justice than is open opposition. The truth is that "the man with the hoe," idealized in art, sung in poetry, petted by politicians, has been generally neglected, widely despised—and almost universally exploited. This charge lies not alone at the door of the Brahmans of India with their horrible cult of untouchability that excludes sixty millions of India's people from the veriest minimum of human rights; nor of the Czarist régime in Russia, the fertile seed-bed of the present proletarian revolution; nor of the governing and scholarly élite of China which for forty centuries has paid lip service to the farmer by putting him next to the scholar in traditional honor but has done nothing to help him improve his lot. It would be both a perversion of history and a gesture of demagoguery to assert that the Western world has not aided the farmer. Germany, the Scandinavian count-

ries, France, have all demonstrated during the past seventy-five years the wisdom of a policy of conserving the welfare of the farmers, albeit military power and even political stability may in some cases have been the main motives. The United States has an enviable record for many aspects of rural progress. Yet it can be said without exaggeration, that our expanding industry and its concomitants of commercial and financial power and a huge increase of city population, as well as the whole range of attitudes that accompany recurrent orgies of rank speculation and extravagant spending, have produced a dominating city-mind, proud of its power, supercilious of rural morals and culture, chafing under such rural political or social controls as remain, and disinclined even to listen to the claims of the farm people for rudimentary justice. Not all of this neglect is by deliberate design. The tides of human affairs bear us increasingly cityward, and the disposition of our present age to glorify profits and to solidify the privileges that result from the power with which profits endow their beneficiaries is fostered in the city where profits are greatest.

Thus far the Protestant Christian Church has been relatively impotent in restraining or modifying these attitudes. It has not succeeded either in preserving the former leadership of the country church or in possessing the villages of so-called missionary lands for domination by the Christian way of life. The church too has neglected the countryside. But there are evidences of

a new sense of the significance of the rural masses, as well as of an aroused determination of Christian agencies to project themselves into the areas of influence that promise release to these rural masses from their bondage of underprivilege in whatever form it may appear. And so we have a new hope for the farmers of the world because of this new promise of the Christian enterprise to meet the needs of rural people and the belief that because of this fresh revival of Christian power there may ensue a new day for rural folk.

In order to consider with any degree of satisfaction the ways by which this new leadership of Christian forces may be realized, it is necessary to survey the territory in which these forces must deploy and over which they must advance. Hence our initial query, Are farmers worth while? We need to recall some of the reasons for the significance of rural populations as a basis for intelligent procedure in helping them.

The significance of the rural problem lies first in sheer numbers. Precise figures are not available for populations engaged in tilling the soil nor for the additional numbers who live under conditions similar to those of the farmers and whose occupations are closely dependent upon or at least associated with farming. It is believed that out of a world population of nearly 2,000,000,000, certainly not less than 1,000,000,000 and probably more than that, are essentially rural folk.¹

¹ The subject of this lecture is borrowed from a recent stimulating and informing book that bears the title, *The Rural Billion*,

The rather generally accepted proportions of rural people in some of the countries of larger populations are as follows:

India, 90% of a population of 350,000,000.
China, 85% of a population of 400,000,000.
Russia, 75% of a population of 150,000,000.
Japan, 50% of a population of 65,000,000.
Germany, 40% of a population of 65,000,000.
France, 50% of a population of 40,000,000.

If these estimates are valid, we have already found 850,000,000 rural people in these half-dozen countries. Italy, Spain, the Scandinavian countries, the Balkans, the congeries of peoples known as the Near East, are also mainly rural. In the continent of Africa, less than five per cent of a population estimated at 140,000,000 lives in cities. In the United States, although only one quarter of our families are farm families, nearly half our people live under essentially rural conditions. Latin America is dominantly agricultural.

There are deeper meanings to this rural question than mere numbers, and perhaps they may be more strikingly revealed if we dwell for a little upon some of the gains to the world as a whole if the situation among the rural masses could be substantially improved.

Consider first the economic aspect of improved conditions in Asia. These masses might secure a marked

by C. M. McConnell, Friendship Press, New York. Professor McConnell's assertion that "two-thirds of the human race live under rural conditions" is perhaps justified.

increase in their standard of living if they could grow more fruits, more vegetables, more meat, more milk. These increases are not easily made, but they are of vital importance for health and vigor, particularly with reference to giving the children and youth a good start. A wiser use of land is imperative and would mean gains not alone to the individual. Land is a social possession, the most precious material wealth that the human race is heir to. Losses of fertility from any cause, such as the enormous drains from soil erosion, are public calamities of the first magnitude and are passed on as major liabilities to succeeding generations.

Obviously the continued growth of population in the cities depends upon an adequate food supply, and at present science promises no other source of supply than the soil. Raw materials for manufacture will doubtless increasingly come from soil-grown products. Another item of economic significance, rather new to the urban consciousness, is the call of modern industry for greater consumption of its products. If the per capita consuming power of this rural billion could be increased by only ten dollars a year, a substantial market would be afforded to industrial enterprise. The whole world has a business stake in these masses of people who till the land.

Consider some desired social gains. Let us suppose that in the next two generations India and China and Russia could follow the example of Japan and eliminate illiteracy. It would greatly enhance the cultural power

of the world. If science could be substituted for superstition, there would be not only economic gain but a revolution in the outlook of hundreds of millions of people. If the new-born infant had a fair chance for life, for reasonable health, for measurable vigor; if the conditions and outlooks of the women and girls of these villages could be brought to a humane level, there would be a new world for half its population. If these great masses once catch a vision of true progress for themselves, the human race will advance by long strides.

Another important phase of this rural question, containing both a menace and a promise, is the political power which these village masses will exert in the near future. In India the campaign for independence went slowly until it became evident that the villagers were enlisted. Perhaps there is nowhere in the world on so large a scale a more hopeless mass of humanity than the sixty millions of the depressed classes of India, yet they have their own spokesman in the National Assembly in Delhi as well as at the Round Tables in London. Every statesman in China recognizes that the Chinese peasantry must be reckoned with. In Japan the new manhood franchise brings the farmers at once to the front as an important and perhaps decisive element. In Russia it is the peasantry that have constituted the most serious problem for the Soviet government.

Our very neglect of these masses is significant. We have been so busy building railroads, expanding industries, widening commerce, strengthening financial insti-

tutions, increasing the populations of cities, that both the zest of the chase and the difficulties encountered have absorbed our energies and commanded our attention. Now we begin to see that we cannot build an adequate civilization in which only the urban people have opportunity. The neglect and the exploitation of the farmer will soon rise to plague those nations that permit it. Indeed, a hinterland of uneducated, poverty-ridden, unprivileged rural masses in any country is a heavy burden on the back of progress in all countries.

HOW THE RURAL BILLION LIVE

These lectures are not intended as an analysis of the rural problem. Yet it is impossible to understand the task of the Christian enterprise among the rural people of the world without trying to get at least a bird's-eye view of the areas of need.

In British India the amount of cultivated land for each head of agricultural population is about an acre while the annual income per capita is estimated at thirty to forty dollars a year. There are believed to be more than one million money lenders, and the huge total debt of the peasantry has never been accurately computed. Interest rates are never less than twenty-five or thirty per cent and far more frequently seventy-five. Disease is rampant. Apart from epidemics, such scourges as malaria, hookworm, tuberculosis, take an appalling toll. Only two per cent of the women and fourteen per cent of the men can read their native language. The caste

system makes sharp divisions with its thousands of castes and sub-castes. Not less than sixty million are outcastes, the so-called depressed classes. The majority of the farmers, owing to the climate, can work their land for only five or six months of the year.

In China the conditions are perhaps not quite so depressing as in India, due largely to the fact that there is no caste. The climate itself, while rigorous and trying in the North, on the whole is less debilitating. Nevertheless, ample evidences of gross underprivilege are present. Literacy is only fifteen per cent. In one authentic study, the average yearly income per family was found to be \$140 Mex., or about \$50 in American money, and represented the funds available for other wants than food, raw material for clothing, and house rent. The size of land holdings varies widely from the semi-arid north to the humid south, and probably averages larger than in India. The defects that press most seriously upon the Chinese peasants can be lessened only by public action—flood, famine, deforestation, soil erosion, lack of communications, banditry. There has been thus far no government capable of providing these basic measures of alleviation, proper facilities for education, co-operative societies, public health.

The farmers of Japan have shared in a measure the economic advance of that remarkable country during the past two generations and are far better off than the peasants of China and India, though the recent depression has wrought havoc among them and particularly

with the tenants. During the past decade there have been over ten thousand tenant strikes. There are many areas where the income is not enough for sustenance. Education, however, reaches the villages and there are practically no illiterates in Japan. The government has provided co-operative societies, health supervision, and an efficient expert agricultural service.

The Russian peasant just before the revolution was only a few removes from his former serfdom. It is said that his income was not over one hundred dollars per year, that he was sixty per cent illiterate, and that he had no rights whatever economically or politically. The present policy of the Soviet Government will be referred to later.

Seventy-five years ago nearly all the countries of western Europe faced the rural problem in one form or another, due partly to bad conditions among the peasants themselves and partly to competition of the western continents. Genuine reconstruction took place, so that by the turn of the century it could be said that the peasantry of western Europe were reasonably content, although they may not have had the advantages of the urban workers.

It is quite as easy to overstress the sad conditions that have been mentioned as it is to overlook them. In every country there are prosperous farmers. This is true even in overpopulated China and India, and it is certainly so in Japan. The French peasantry are admittedly one of the chief anchors of French national

economic stability. The farmers of Denmark have secured to an unusual degree a combination of economic well-being, sound education, and political influence.

Moreover, many of the defects mentioned are themselves to be qualified. Illiteracy, for example, is not ignorance. The peasants of India and China show much wisdom in dealing with their problems and possess a traditional skill that cannot be denied. The Chinese villager habitually wears a smile, and one sees happy children on the village streets. The joint-family system has rendered "poor houses" and asylums unnecessary. Village government has on the whole been effective and just. These people have made practical adjustments to life; they do live.

With these allowances, however, stark facts remain as proof of essential bondage and crass underprivilege among the majority of the rural folk of the world. There is no possible denial that these people live far below the minimum requirements for the making of manhood and womanhood, for giving human personality a fair chance.

It may be remarked that these foreign situations are only of minor interest to citizens of the United States, both because they deal with great hordes of inferior peoples who are no special concern of ours, and because the American farmer is in a far different class and faces no such conditions. Has not the North American farmer had a remarkable record of achievement, of intelligence, and of character? The reply is that these great

masses of other continents are rapidly becoming our concern, both from the economic and the humanitarian points of view. These people are improvable. Furthermore, economic and social conditions are always relative and an entire decade of agricultural depression in America lays bare some unpleasant truths concerning our own rural life. It would take us too far afield to present the situation fully, but a few statements will reveal some of the more outstanding difficulties.

The Secretary of Agriculture states that in 1929 the gross income from agriculture was twelve billion dollars, in 1930 it was nine and one-third billion dollars, and for 1931 is estimated as seven billion dollars. And he asserts that the net income of our farmers from the production of 1930 fell short of providing a wage allowance for the farm operator's labor at going farm-labor rates, and left no reward for the farmer's capital or management. The purchasing power of farm products, that is the ratio between prices received by farm producers and prices they paid for commodities they used in living and production, 100 being pre-war figures, stood at 75 in 1921 and at 86 in 1928, and ranged around the latter figure for the intervening years, thus indicating a steady drain on farm resources. Since 1928 the discrepancy is much greater. The farm wage index rose from 146 in 1922 to 169 in 1928, though it dropped to 118 in 1931. The index for taxes rose from 130 in 1919 to 266 in 1930. Interest rates have declined somewhat, but the farmers for the past few years have

THE RURAL BILLION

been paying interest on about nine billion dollars of indebtedness as compared with three and one-half billions in 1910. Of the farms changing ownership during the three years 1925-28, from forty per cent to forty-five per cent were forced sales.

The National Industrial Conference Board estimated the per capita income of farm population in the year of highest agricultural prices at one-half that of non-farm population, and in 1921 a little over one-fourth. Dr. Black states that in 1928 the real income of New York factory workers was thirty per cent above 1920; of farmers sixteen per cent under that level. For the seven years 1924-1930, inclusive, the income per farm available for labor and management was approximately one-half the average factory wages per person employed. For the same period, the operating farmer's reward averaged about the same as wages paid his farm labor.

Our best statistical authorities estimate that the proportion of the total national income received by our farmers (the numbers of farms remaining about the same) was—1910, 16.6 per cent; 1920, 14.9 per cent; 1928, 9.3 per cent.

In comparing the conditions of farmers with urban or with non-farming rural folk, we find so many complexities that a really fair estimate is extremely difficult. There are widespread degrees of competence among farmers, ranging from that of men who would succeed anywhere but prefer farming, to those who would suc-

ceed nowhere but find the land safer for them than the uncertain economic seas of city occupations. Agriculture is not one business, but fifty. Each commodity has its own technique, its particular market, even its special effect on types of men who grow it. The farmer requires capital and labor, usually on a small scale, and is himself an undertaker and a laborer. Such factors as credit, taxes, costs of production, a just price and the spread in price between producer and customer, the various values of the dollar, types of management, demand for products, changes in consumers' tastes, competition between producers in different regions or countries—all these are economic elements common to farmers and to urban business, but in their practical workings differ radically between the two groups. The farmer's standard of living is greatly affected by his ability to grow some of his own food and by the relatively infrequent appeals of shop windows.

The Master of the National Grange asserts that today "farm products have but fifty-seven per cent of their pre-war purchasing power." He also says that in 1929 there were 504 persons in the United States with an income sufficiently large to have purchased all the wheat and cotton grown in the country that year.

The use of further figures would be simply confusing. Perhaps it will suffice to quote one of the leading American economists:

"The present plight of the American farmer is a matter of universal knowledge. At perhaps no preceding period

in our history have the complaints been so protracted and so loud."

"The returns of agricultural enterprise in almost every line have for the last few years been meager and inadequate. With the disappearance of agricultural profits, mortgages have been foreclosed, the most strenuous efforts have failed to bring corresponding results, and a pronounced net exodus from the farm to the town has taken place."²

These sentences you will note were written at the very peak of what we called national prosperity.

The Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in his report for 1931 sums up the situation in this fashion:

"Prices for farm products have declined drastically and in some instances have gone below previous bottom prices. Prices of commodities that farmers buy have also declined, but not in a corresponding degree. Taxes, furthermore, have remained at peak levels, and debts have yielded grudgingly in the face of dwindling farm incomes. As the causes of the present situation are many, so are the avenues of solution. It is a situation that calls for far-reaching adjustment in production and marketing, in credit, taxation, land utilization, and in state and national policies affecting agriculture. It is a situation that requires action by the farmer, the business man, and by national and state governments. Some of these adjustments may be made more or less promptly, others only more gradually."

In the *Annual Review of Rural Life*—for 1931—in "Information Service" (published weekly by the Federal Council of Churches, appeared these paragraphs:

² Seligman, Edwin R. A., *The Economics of Farm Relief*, p. xiii (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929).

"Defaulting of taxes increases, and in many areas even conservative economists can only conclude that we have come into an era when farm land is being practically confiscated by the state."

"One can still read anything about agriculture in the important journals and newspapers, which, having never taken seriously the interpretation of rural affairs, help to perpetuate the confusion of the public mind in regard to the relation of agriculture to the total situation."

The steady diminution in the proportion of farmers to other groups is popularly regarded as the measure of American rural difficulties. Only one-fourth of our people and our workers are farmers. For thirty years there has been free use of the legend "back to the farm," embodying an idea often futile and even mischievous. The recent population drift to rural areas is due to urban unemployment and merely exaggerates the farmers' plight. What has happened in the United States has occurred in every country with expanding industries. Among the causes the chief are the new economic opportunities in the cities, where industry locates, and the increased efficiency of farmers themselves. The crucial problems raised by this population shift arise, not out of the mere fact of changing proportions in farm and non-farm populations, but in the rapidity of the change. In our own land another major factor in the farm question is the automobile. It is not a mere play upon words to say that this new machine has made a once static group automatically mobile. This mobility of movement between country and city and within the

rural areas themselves has undermined every rural social institution, especially the church, which is the slowest of all to adapt itself to a rapidly changing scene. We have sensed the need of a permanent agriculture, but we have to deal with an impermanent agriculture. The marked shift of population from country to city is less significant for itself than for the breaking up of local allegiances and neighborhood interests. It is conceivable that with the increase in the efficiency of farming the farm could spare its surplus population. But the process has been so rapid, the changes in communication have been so sharp, that the whole social structure has broken down and a new one has not yet been erected.

Doubtless at the present moment the plight of farmers is part of the general depression. But it is equally certain that there is a deeper dip into the trough of a difficulty that has existed for an entire decade. Not only so, but barring a few years of exaggerated war boom, our farmers as a class are relatively poorer than they were twenty years ago.

It is not true, however, that recent years in American agriculture have brought only sorrow. The possession by the farmers of 4,000,000 automobiles, 900,000 motor trucks, as many tractors, 2,000,000 telephones, electric lighting in nearly 850,000 farm dwellings, several hundred thousand radio sets, is indicative of large capital expenditure for tools of production as well as for increased standards of living, greater conveniences, les-

sened drudgery. Educational gains include the opening up of thousands of rural high schools and school departments of agriculture and home economics, and the service of the most extensive system of adult education in the world, and that for farmers and their families. With respect to rural schools, recreation, cultural life, though the situation is not entirely satisfactory and in some cases, as for example in medical care and public health, comparison with the city reveals distinct handicaps among farming people, the present century has brought distinct gains.

RURAL TRENDS

It is impossible in the time at our command even to summarize present trends in the rural world, and to try to portray these tendencies in a few sentences involves the risk of false analysis and of serious misunderstanding. But it may be said that the guideposts point along the following highways of change.

The expansion of industry and the consequent growth of cities has enlarged the market for soil-grown products and made commercial agriculture possible. But it has also forced agriculture to compete with industry for capital, for labor, and for such economic advantages as may arise from taxation, tariffs, credits, transportation rates. It is not at all impossible that eventually this competition may be modified, both by increasing agrarian power, and by the growth of a partly self-sufficient agriculture. It is hardly conceivable, however, that an industrialized urban economy will

THE RURAL BILLION

not eventually spread across the world and give direction to even if it does not entirely dominate the agricultural rural economy.

Collective action by farmers has grown apace. Voluntary in character, but encouraged as a rule by government, it has covered Europe; in North America has had marked growth during the past decade; has even made its beginnings in Asia and in Southern Africa and Australia. The existence of 80,000 co-operative societies in India, and of 13,000 in Japan, is suggestive of a flowing tide. In the United States the growth in co-operation is shown by these figures:

| Year | No. of Associations | Volume of Business | Membership |
|------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1915 | 5,424 | \$ 635,839,000 | 651,186 |
| 1931 | 11,950 | \$2,400,000,000 | 3,000,000 |

It can scarcely be doubted that associated effort among rural people for practically all the ends of human living will eventually become a fixed characteristic of rural civilization, unless such compulsory collectivism as in Russia is driving out voluntary co-operation shall spread to other larger areas.

The education of rural people is so complex in itself and so varied in its manifestations that generalization is all but futile. Needs differ all the way from those provided by colleges of agriculture with standard academic requirements to the mass education of hosts of illiterates. Western Europe has probably succeeded better than any other part of the world, unless it be

Japan, in providing a well-knit system of education for those who remain on the farm. In North America, while great strides have been taken in recent years, more especially in adult education, educational equipment that facilitates the movement of youth away from the farm is more in evidence than that which incites them to and trains them for a satisfying life on the farm. In the areas of huge village populations educational provision is most inadequate. Russia at present is doing more than any other country to educate an ignorant peasantry.

Revolutionary rural social changes are occurring under our very eyes, in nearly all parts of the world, due chiefly to the automobile. Relatively these changes are most marked in North America and least marked among the European peasantry. To an astonishing degree in India, in Southern Africa, in Japan, in the Philippine Islands, and with beginnings even in China, new communications are breaking down ancient barriers to the villages, widening their horizons, and assisting migrations.

The potential political strength of rural people is gradually increasing. In the United States, while their numerical voting power steadily declines, never so much as recently have the special needs of farmers received attention in national and state legislation. In France, no cabinet would dream of challenging the peasant electorate. In England, the most highly urbanized country in the world, every political party has had a commission to study and report to it an agricultural

program. It is interesting that one of the outstanding comments of Lloyd George on the results of the British election last autumn was that his opponents had not sufficiently recognized the all-important rural problem. A friend of mine was told in India a year ago by a leader of the National Congress that the time had clearly come when the peasantry must be reckoned with in the politics of India. Not long ago in Denmark it was proposed that the farmers go on strike until their legislative demands were heard. Even more significant in the long look ahead are the village tax riots in India, the rural banditry in China, the tenant strikes in Japan. There is already under way a march of the rural masses toward far larger influence and power than they have ever had before or had even dreamed of.

It was interesting to read in a recent magazine article that the reason why France had been less affected by the world depression than other countries was because,

"Basically France's rise represents the triumph—momentary, perhaps, but nevertheless the triumph—of the older agricultural, non-industrial order of life. It represents the backward-glancing triumph of the soil. France of the Great Powers has yielded least to the machine, to the modern industrial high-speed era. France is least dependent upon the vast outpouring of machine-made goods and the frantic scattering of such output by high-speed international trade and savagely stimulated domestic consumption. Her agriculture is diversified, rationalized, not an imitation of high-speed industrial overproduction."³

³ Spring, Samuel, "France on Parade," *Atlantic Monthly*, December, 1931.

In the United States the prospect seems to be in the direction of eventual success and a satisfying life for intelligent farmers, properly educated, farming good land. We may estimate this group as comprising perhaps ten to fifteen per cent of the farmers—let us say one-tenth to one-sixth. At the bottom there will be the least competent, possibly also ten to fifteen per cent of the total number of farmers, who for an indefinite future will still be with us, as in any other country and under any social or political régime. They are doubtfully improvable. They are poor in every sense. But they can exist with less uncertainty on the land than apart from it. Between these extremes are the two-thirds to four-fifths who whether as owners or renters constitute the real farm problem. There is grave danger that we may witness a steady deterioration in their status during the next quarter century.

WILL THE COUNTRY BECOME CITY?

In all industrial countries, but far more in the United States than elsewhere, there is a trend toward the urbanization of the country. The automobile which transports farm people to population centers, and the radio which transmits urbanized amusements and ideas to the farm people, have brought revolution in rural-urban relationships. But this revolution has worked both ways. Doubtless there is a sophistication of the farmers and the breaking down of the more obvious superficial differences between dwellers in the city and

THE RURAL BILLION

dwellers in the country. There is also a ruralization of the city. The automobile carries people out of the city as well as into it. The suburbanization of all our industrial cities has gone on at a remarkable rate. Indeed, there are those who would solve the problem of congested populations by transferring large blocks of workers to the small towns or villages. Our population is steadily grouping itself into the congested city, the suburb, the large village or small city, the village, the open-country with its separated farmsteads, and an already large and a rapidly increasing number of urban workers scattered in unorganized fashion within the areas easily accessible to the cities. The census of 1930 has compelled us to define rural more broadly. Only three-fifths of the rural people are farmers. The non-farming rural people are separable into two classes, those whose occupations are wholly or considerably dependent upon the farmers, such as village merchants and in general purveyors of supplies and services to farmers, and those who have chosen to live outside the cities or in the secondary suburbs of cities but who are occupationally dependent upon the city.

The retired farmer continues to be both a barometer of and a menace to rural progress. The retired farmer is the most comfortable human being in the world—and the most useless. He has pulled up his roots in the wide open spaces, and spends his remaining days in a village flowerpot as it were, basking in the sunshine and warmth of a heated porch. Personally we may not blame him,

and certainly not if his son succeeds him on the farm, but the desertion of the farm for village idleness is the most devastating commentary we have on the present inadequacy of American farm life.

There are those who believe that the urbanizing process is going on so rapidly and so completely that distinctive rural thinking and even distinctive rural institutions will soon pass. There is little doubt but rural institutions will be modified. The school has already been profoundly affected, and the country church is in a period of transition with the prospect of forming new centers. Amusement is found almost wholly away from the farm home and the old neighborhood centers.

But distinctly urban psychology does not arise only because people live close together. To one who has to be introduced to city life, it is amazing to discover the social isolation of those units, either individuals or families, who occupy adjacent houses or adjoining apartments. The distinctive mark of the city is a new social atmosphere. The daily paper, the subway, the crowded restaurant, the packed theater, the spectacles that draw the crowd, the overcrowded schoolrooms, the wage system, a hundred things unite to produce an urban mind that has many differences from the rural mind. It is an interesting question how far the widespread extension of urban facilities among people who still live in the rural environment will bridge the differences between rural and urban. Every aspect of

rural life will be profoundly affected in its aims and methods by the answer.

I hold with those who believe that the essential characteristics of farm culture will persist indefinitely. If we consider the great masses of farmers, it will be long before their characteristics are transformed by influences that are powerful merely because they are urban. Unquestionably with free communication ideas and ideals will more and more be the common possession of city and country. But there will remain deep-flowing currents of essential culture characteristic of those who live and work on the land. A generation ago we could fairly speak of isolation as the marked distinction of farm life as contrasted with city life. That no longer holds. There still is, and I think there will always be, an "apartness" to farmers. Their physical environment, their daily work, their handling of the soil, their dealing with plants, their companionship with animals, the comparative quiet of the environment, the working as individuals or in small groups as contrasted with working in large groups, the necessity of considering the weather and the very personal reactions to changes in the weather, the peculiar unity of work and home life, the separation of the family from other families for a good part of the day or the week, the selective processes that leave on the land people with more or less similar tastes and capacities, the persistence of traditions—all of these things will continue to give us "the rural mind."

It must not be supposed that this farmer mind will necessarily be an inferior mind. It is quite possible that on the average it may be superior. For an argument can be made for the proposition that, given effective social institutions and a reasonable standard of living, the farm has advantages for the masses of men, if we think in terms of essential character and sane outlook on life.

It is not at all improbable that those of you who deal with the church primarily are already restless over the time that has been taken in describing economic and social conditions and trends in the rural world. The excuse for the present lecture is that we can no longer safely attempt to express the Christian message, map a program for Christian enterprises, or assess the values of Christian work without an understanding of these situations and tendencies. Not only do they profoundly affect the church as an institution, but they are themselves the area of work for the church. Unless the Christian church can turn the tides of its influence into channels which carry the fructifying waters of life to the very roots of every human planting, the rural people, like the rest of mankind, will attempt to draw their sustenance from some other source for what they regard as an abundant life.

May I try to enforce my conviction on this point by a personal word? It chanced that forty years ago almost to a day, I entered upon my duties as editor of a paper owned and published on behalf of the State

Grange of Michigan. Fresh from college, I was thus introduced to the idealism of and association with the able leadership of the oldest of our existing farmers' organizations. I shall never forget the thrill with which I read and pondered a legend which was already a classic expression in the Grange—"The farmer is of more consequence than the farm and should be first improved." After these twoscore years of constant work with rural folk, I would today still inscribe those words on the banner of any group seeking the permanent welfare of the people of the soil. For they challenge every movement, every device for increased production of goods, fairer distribution of wealth, or provision of farm and household convenience, with the abiding truth that all these things are as dust and ashes unless they minister to the worth of the farmer himself; indeed, that the surest path to economic satisfaction is by way of improving the quality of the minds and hearts of the people.

The final issue in rural civilization is not economic but moral and spiritual. The abiding question is whether or not we can secure and permanently maintain a type of human life as well as a standard of material comfort that can satisfy the intellectual, the aesthetic, the moral, and the spiritual ideas of the multitudes of men and women on the land who have potentially within themselves the destiny of sons and daughters of the Most High God.

RELIGION AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

IN ORDER THAT THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE MAY EXERT its full measure of influence with the rural masses, it must appreciate the situations and trends among these multitudes. These we have already sketched. But it must needs know also the constructive measures now under way to ameliorate conditions, the genius and objective of social planning as it affects rural folk, and the forces and institutions that are to be utilized in continued progress toward a fairer rural social order. These considerations we may now proceed to set forth.

THE RURAL RECONSTRUCTION MOVEMENT

Unsatisfactory rural conditions have not gone unnoticed or unchallenged. Some of the trends already mentioned seem to be great currents that bear society

along whether it will or no. Other tendencies have been the results of planning. There is abroad in the world a movement that looks toward a re-forming, a reconstructing of those situations under which rural people have been living and that militate against their happiness, prosperity, and true development.

The countries of Western Europe were brought almost to the point of rural bankruptcy over a half century ago by reason of an incoming flood of soil-grown commodities from the Western Hemisphere competing with the products of an ignorant, debt-ridden, and in some countries a semi-enslaved peasantry. One of the great social transformations of history occurred during the latter third of the nineteenth century among the peasants of western Europe. In recent years these farmers on the whole have held their own in comparison with other classes of the population, and it is not easy to discover any marked or sharp developments since the war.

In the east of Europe, however, even outside of Russia, the Great War brought an agrarian revolution, and the land was taken over by the small peasants. Economic and political conditions since the armistice have been so upsetting that there are no good scales for weighing results. There has probably been a letting down of efficiency in production but a vast strengthening of the political power of the peasantry.

In England the agricultural question occupies a peculiar position. Over a hundred years ago, when the

industrial revolution was taking its stride, England deliberately chose to build industry at the expense of her agriculture. Today about one-tenth of her workers are in agriculture. She has consistently refused to put a tax on imported food until within a few months. Though neither the farmers nor the farm laborers are strong enough to determine elections, every political party in England has investigated the farm problem and announced that it was one of the important issues in the nation. More than twenty years ago England maintained a "development commission" as a body to recommend correlated rural activities.

In Russia, as the world now knows, the drama of the most thoroughgoing agrarian revolution in all history is being enacted before our eyes. There will be occasion for another reference to this remarkable project to reconstruct the whole life of a peasant multitude.

In India the drive for political independence has absorbed the energies of India's leadership, but rural advancement has not been neglected. The so-called "nation-building departments" of the government, such as agriculture, education, health, veterinary science, land settlement, have been active in the villages. The irrigation system of India is the most extensive in the world. Nearly fifty million land holdings are registered with the government and form the basis both for leasing and taxing. Great Indian leaders like Tagore and the late K. T. Paul have committed themselves to village improvement. A Royal Commission has recently

studied the agricultural situation with great care and recommended that a more unified approach to the improvement of farming be made by the various departments of Government.

In China the government, owing to internal struggles and its consequent inability to borrow money for major improvements, is not making much progress in rural reconstruction though one sees a great change in a decade. Sun Yat Sen made "the people's livelihood" a major doctrine, and the government has at least paper plans for extensive developments in rural education, peasant co-operation, rural health and hygiene, rural government, reforestation. In 1931 a "ten-year plan" for national development was projected.

In Japan the farmers have shown as much progress as perhaps in any other country, considering the limitations under which they work. Only fifteen per cent of the land area is farmed or can be farmed. In thirty years the average production per unit of land cultivated has increased substantially for all groups. There are thirteen thousand co-operative societies. Some eleven thousand agricultural experts are employed by the government to serve the five and one-half million farm households of the country. Scientific research is carried on in the most approved fashion. No effort has been spared to develop the efficiency of the farmer.

In the United States sharp changes have taken place during recent years. The Roosevelt Country Life Commission was appointed in 1908, and its report was pub-

lished the following spring. There is little doubt but this commission was a milestone in the country life movement in the United States. It was an exploration into the whole rural field, which revealed and stated the situation and appropriate remedies in nearly the entire range of rural problems. Its report was partly an expression of impending change and partly an incentive to new thought and planning, which has led to many marked developments in the effort to improve conditions among rural people.

The United States Department of Agriculture has expanded tremendously. One notable feature is a Bureau of Agricultural Economics with a personnel of 2,700 and an annual expenditure of several million dollars. The co-operative extension work in agriculture and home economics employs more than 6,000 full-time trained experts and has enlisted the services of probably 300,000 volunteer workers. Nearly 850,000 boys and girls are enrolled in the "4-H clubs." There are now 8,000 federally aided agricultural departments or schools, with an enrolment of 235,000 pupils. The movement for the consolidation of rural schools has gained some ground. The Scouts have invaded the countryside. The health movement in general has made some progress, especially in strikingly effective efforts to control such diseases as hookworm. Rural art has received attention, notably through the country theater. Vocational guidance for rural boys and girls is being organized. Among farm associations the Grange has

held its own, and there has arisen the other great organization, the American Farm Bureau Federation. The farmers are not always united in pressing their interests upon Congress, but have more specific influence in Washington than at any other time in American history. The problems, the deficiencies, and the reform of local government in rural communities are commanding the attention of keen students. The church, on the whole, has probably lost ground, although foundations have been laid for distinct progress, by reason of the organization of rural departments in some of the leading denominations, the activities of the Federal Council of Churches and of the Home Missions Council, the development of a considerable number of schools for country clergymen, provision for the specialized training of rural pastors in theological seminaries, rural church surveys. The American Country Life Association has brought to a common platform the representatives of scores of different organizations interested in rural affairs and has pioneered in national conferences in some of the rural problems of first importance. The Institute of Social and Religious Research has investigated rural conditions as they relate to religious interests in a way that has brought us invaluable information and developed a most efficient method of study in this field. Business men's organizations have given far more attention to the agricultural question than at any previous time, and a number of private universities have offered work in agricultural economics and rural sociology.

For nearly thirty years the International Institute of Agriculture in Rome, a child of the fertile mind of a prophetic type of American citizen, David Lubin, has sought to gather knowledge of agricultural conditions that might suffice for more adequate co-ordinated effort among the various governments and peoples. There are numerous other international bodies dealing with agricultural interests.

This rural reconstruction movement is real and world-wide. It is of significance because of the numbers involved, the conditions under which most of the rural people live, and the possibilities of further progress economically, socially, politically, racially, religiously.

PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE

Since the war, with its aftermath of chaos, the world has come to see the need of an effort to correlate rebuilding, reconstructing, not merely through fragmentary and isolated efforts, but in some unified way. The League of Nations has had at least two world conferences on the economic situation. World wheat and sugar conferences illustrate the new mood. The present economic depression in the United States has driven us to a consideration of economic planning on a large scale. There is forthcoming a wealth of suggestions in books, articles, and the pronouncements of imaginary dictators. Some of these plans give little attention to agriculture, although there are business men's organizations and occasionally individuals which have frankly

and sympathetically dwelt upon the importance of a planned agriculture as a part of the national need for wiser social direction. There is no doubt that the "five-year plan of Soviet Russia" has had a most stimulating effect in our own country.

Until about a decade ago there was not much discussion even in American agricultural circles regarding an agricultural policy or plan. But the agricultural slump of 1921 was a forerunner of a change of views and of much effort. A national conference in Washington, several commissions, a well-considered report representing all the agricultural colleges in America, a score of state plans for agriculture, "drives" for legislation to give farm relief, offer a multiplicity of evidences that rural planning is wanted. The famous Farm Board was clearly intended to plan effectively on a large scale within a certain range of commodity interests. So we are made familiar with "orderly marketing," "stabilization," "an agricultural policy."

The need for an agricultural plan is much the same as that for an industrial plan. But it differs in this fundamental respect: Planning for industry is made necessary chiefly by mass production on the part of a few thousand large-scale producers; agricultural planning is made necessary by the unco-ordinated activities and even the serious competition of several million small-scale producers. It is doubtful if the peculiar difficulties that inhere in planning for rural progress have had sufficient attention. We should give them some con-

sideration, for they have a bearing upon the plans of the church for advancing its conception of human welfare.

One of the difficulties that must be overcome in successful agricultural planning is reflected in the attitude of the general public. It used to be said that the farmers must be left alone to work out their own salvation. This argument has usually been used against legislation for farm relief. We hear less of this comment since it has been found necessary for business itself to seek relief on a huge scale at the hands of the Federal Government. Few people really believe a downright doctrine of individualism. Neither industry, nor commerce, nor transportation, nor banking relies or ever has relied upon unaided personal initiative. Legislation, organization, publicity, all the paraphernalia of collective power, are involved. It must be so with those who till the ground. This does not imply that personal efficiency can be dispensed with. On the contrary, a case can be made for the thesis that personal inefficiency is immoral. Nor do we gainsay the need of the collective activities of farmers; they are often a better remedy than legislation. Indeed, failure to co-operate is fatal.

When we leave our own shores the injustice of this laissez faire principle becomes especially menacing. Whether the let-alone practice rises from neglect or from some political theory, or out of a belief that the great populations of Asia and Africa are hopeless, it nevertheless stifles all hopes of progress for the masses

of mankind. It but sharpens the division between the privileged and the unprivileged. It is inconsistent with any sane theory of human development.

Farmers themselves doubtless furnish much of the difficulty in planning; the mere numbers of them, for one thing, each with his independent small business, his traditional independence and love of it. These facts probably have in part fostered a favorite panacea offered by many business men and favored by a considerable number of agricultural editors, by some students of the problem, by an occasional farmer. I refer to the proposition to industrialize farming. This probably means the application of modern methods of manufacture to the creation of soil-grown materials, and presumably involves some of the chief characteristics of the modern industrial order, such as: (1) Use of a machine wherever possible. (2) Mass production. (3) Determining the costs of production with the greatest precision and crowding them to the lowest minimum. (4) Pressure salesmanship which continually arouses new wants if not new needs. (5) The command of adequate supplies of capital. (6) The corporation in some of its many forms.

How far characteristics of industry such as these can be profitably utilized in agriculture is an exceedingly interesting and important problem. In diluted form some of these requisites of successful industrial production have already been applied to agricultural production. Farm machinery is a large item in the farm inven-

tory. The average value of land and buildings of all farms is \$7,600, and the capital invested in a prosperous farm in the Middle West will often run as high as \$40,000. Fifty years ago farm capital was largely in land purchased at a nominal figure from the government, very slightly in implements, always in horses, but largely in the man behind the plow and his physical vigor and spiritual endurance.

It is altogether too easy an answer to our query concerning agricultural progress simply to advance industrialization as the panacea. Most American farmers are not only not fools but are highly intelligent and as eager to get ahead as anyone else. The fact of slow growth of agricultural industrialization is itself a fact to be reckoned with.

But there are some fundamental differences that also have to be considered: (1) A unit of land much sooner reaches the point of diminishing returns than does the machine-equipped factory. (2) The farm crop is seasonal. It can be hurried only slightly and the product is sharply governed by the weather. (3) Units of factory machinery of a certain type are identical and universally usable for their purpose. Units of land differ widely in quality, and the utility of lands of even the best quality is governed significantly by climate, by distance from market, by market demands. You cannot "scrap" land as you can a machine. (4) The costs of farm production vary widely for different years and in different latitudes, even under substantially

identical management. Costs of production even of a single commodity like wheat, cannot by any possible human ingenuity be brought to standard levels. (5) In some respects the sharpest difference with industry is that the capacity of the individual consumer of food is strictly limited. There will be changes in dietaries, but under any régime the standards of consumption quantitatively will not vary greatly. An astonishing fact is asserted by Prof. J. L. Buck in his careful study of Chinese agriculture, that the Chinese farmer consumes 3,461 calories of food, which is almost exactly the accepted standard of Western dietitians for men doing moderate manual work.

Other problems of adjustment in agriculture arise through competition among farmers themselves. In the growing of the same commodity different regions compete; often commodities compete with each other; sections or regions of the country have interests exactly opposite; there is plainly competition between the farmers of different countries. The transfer of these competitions to a measure of co-operation is one of the most exacting issues in rural planning. There is uncertainty of yield from a given unit of land and labor. There is a great multitude of men of all degrees of intelligence and public spirit who must be asked to carry out the plan. Quick shifts in production are impossible. We cannot ask a wheat grower to become a dairyman overnight any more than we can ask a manufacturer of plows to begin to manufacture sewing machines on a day's notice.

Henry Ford can take steps to change production from five hundred cars a day to five thousand or the reverse. Theoretically the farmer can reduce his acreage of a given crop, but he is not at all sure that the substitute crop will pay better. Moreover, his surplus is so small even under favorable conditions, and his need of money for taxes, interest on his debt, and payment for necessary supplies is so pressing that he feels he might as well risk his habitual production as risk a change. Thus far no way has been found to insure the co-operation of farm producers in adhering to a plan of controlled production. The proposed "domestic allotment" plan is the most promising scheme yet suggested.

Rural planning in its full meaning involves plans for the individual farm, for the town and country community, for the county, for the city-country area, for states, regions, nations, for separate commodities. It must be international in scope. Thus at once you can see something of the range and the complicated nature of any real effort at rural planning.

I should like to call special attention to one phase of planning, because in a later lecture I wish to show how profoundly it may affect the country church.

One of the most significant proposals of recent years in the realm of agricultural planning is explained in a publication of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Illinois which described a "Developmental Study of the Rural-Urban Trade Area." This bulletin carries a series of recommendations, followed by

this significant statement: "In order to plan and to carry out successfully a sound developmental program for a rural-urban area the efforts of all agencies in a position to give constructive assistance should be carefully co-ordinated. There are opportunities for all interested organizations, each working with those groups with whom it has most effective contacts." You will understand that this rural-urban area comprises the trading territory of a medium-sized city in the Middle West. The idea is one of the most promising in the whole field of a planned agriculture.

A recent writer in England, discussing the world economic situation, made the assertion that "British democracy is pioneering in the effort to reconcile social control and rational planning with the flexible play of economic forces and the retention of individual initiative." This is also probably the philosophy that we in America believe in. We are seeking social self-direction on a rational basis, but we not only want it without autocracy, we want it to encourage individuals without perpetuating individualism.

A planned agriculture we must surely have, complex and difficult though its achievement may be. We want a plan that will satisfy the need of society for soil-grown products as well as the capacity of the soil to sustain farming populations with a reasonable standard of living.

The most serious defect in many current plans is that they deal largely with the problem of stabilization of

profits, but are weak in seeking adjustments of human relations. This is true as between capital and labor, and as between the city business and agriculture. Few of the plans have any philosophy of social justice. Both farmers and industrialists need to see that the main issue is after all not one of devices but of ends. Devices play a vital part. But to what purpose? Human values are the preponderant issue.

Thus far I have discovered in none of these plans a recognized place for the church. Indeed, in one or two proposals set forth by individuals there is a distinct repudiation of organized religion as a factor in progress. Has the church a place in such plans? Has the church a plan? Is there not a clear call to the American church to gird itself for leadership, not by reliance upon general truths, but by endeavoring to discover how the gospel it preaches can be implemented to assist the farmers in their struggle toward the light of a better day?

OBJECTIVES IN RURAL PLANNING

It is not the province of these lectures to map an agricultural policy. Yet the kind of policy that is evolved has the most intimate relationships with the Christian enterprise. It is not enough that a plan shall seem to be technically sound. We want to know whether it is morally sound, whether it makes for social justice, and especially whether it is fair to the farmer. As we proceed to outline some of the objectives which

a rural plan should seek to attain, will you not consider how far each of them comes within the range of interests of the Christian religion?

1. The land itself is the basis of agriculture. Land should be so utilized as to provide society with food and raw materials for manufacture, to increase soil fertility, to give the largest possible number of farm families a reasonable standard of living that includes wise consumption of both tangible and intangible goods, and to encourage individual initiative as well as co-operation for common ends. It is necessary to make a selective use of land, and to strike an average in some fashion between the personal interests of the operators and the public interest of society. Keeping up soil fertility, while in the last analysis a social duty, fortunately also brings its reward to the individual farmer, for the lower costs of production are on the fertile soils.

2. There should be access to the land on terms that are fair for those who actually till the soil. Terms will be fair only when they are based on economic rather than speculative value and when the farmer himself, that is the man who actually operates the land, gains the full advantages of personal management. To achieve this end we have believed in America that the family farm, operated by the owner, offers the best hope. There is strong pressure for larger farm units. But we need to be deeply concerned about the best size of farm and form of management as they affect the personality of the operator and the development of family life.

We have not yet explored the possibilities of co-operative farming, nor the role of the community in providing certain forms of service for the local group of farmers.

3. Tenancy in the United States is on the increase. This fact does not seem to trouble all economists, but it is a matter of anxiety to the unscientific ruralist like myself. A tenant who is climbing the ladder to ownership is as valuable a citizen as any other provided ownership is made reasonably easy. But a transient tenantry means exploitation of the soil, a contraction of manhood, an undermining of the community. This is not true because men are tenants, for a permanent tenantry under fair conditions may be socially effective. But it is difficult for tenants who change farms frequently to become either good farmers or active citizens of the local community. Two short but pertinent recent statements will enforce this point—one is from Oklahoma, the other from North Carolina. "There is general concurrence of opinion among students of farm problems that . . . each step that brings a farmer closer to ownership elevates him both economically and socially."¹

"The greatest single economic and social problem in North Carolina and throughout the South is farm tenancy."² This problem is quite as important from

¹ Duncan, O. D., in *Rural America*, January, 1932.

² Ormond, Jesse Marvin, *The Country Church in North Carolina* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press).

the social and the spiritual as from the economic point of view.

4. The land worker needs capital sufficient to enable him to use his soil and his time most effectively. It is in the interest of society that this capital shall be available to the farm operator on the lowest possible terms consistent with reasonable safety. It will not be easy to strike a balance between the farmer's need for credit on fair terms in order that he may produce effectively and the unwise use of credit. Probably this is not exclusively a farmer's problem!

5. One of the favorite slogans of the farmers today is that the farmer should have a financial reward comparable with that of the other classes of similar standing in the city. Granting the uncertainties hidden in these phrases with respect to whether comparison shall be with unskilled urban labor, with skilled labor, with small retail store keepers, with industry, with big business, or with the professions, and the further difficulty of indicating how, for example, the farmers can be assured the equivalent of a minimum wage, nevertheless here is a general principle that cannot be waved aside in any farm plan.

6. It is generally conceded that the spread between prices at the farm and the prices paid by ultimate consumers continues to be too wide in the case of most commodities. Moreover, it has been the farmer's experience for more than ten years that the general level of prices has been continuously against him; this is disastrous.

7. An interesting change in the attitude of many farmers has taken place in very recent years with respect to the proportion of their needs that they should provide for themselves. There is at present a tendency to increase that amount, and in fact in every way possible to curtail expenditures for supplies. A farm plan should indicate where the balance lies between a wise self-sufficiency and a forced deprivation of reasonable requirements. The urban interest in this aspect of the farm question is quite as keen as that of the farmer himself, because the potential consuming power of thirty million farm people is not to be ignored.

8. Fluctuating values of money constitute one of the most serious handicaps to farming. With a slow turnover inevitable, the farmer cannot adjust himself quickly to sharp changes. A stabilized currency is perhaps more important to the farmer than to any other business man. There are many who believe that the most immediate need in American agriculture today is a dollar restored to its former value.

9. The tax system should conform to the fact that the general property tax as now legalized and administered in most of our states is thoroughly unjust to the farmer. Ability to pay is the fundamental principle in fair taxation. Any plan that fails to revise radically the American system of taxation as it bears upon the farm will make very little headway in reconstructing American agriculture. An important feature of the taxing problem is the failure of most states to

provide for a fair proportion of the support of rural schools and secondary roads from the state treasury. Indeed, a strong case can be made for Federal aid. The rural school is not a local concern alone; it is meaningful for cities and the nation as well.

10. The farmers have gained immensely in their economic efficiency during the last quarter century, but there are still large wastes, for example in the failure to utilize certain leftovers from crops as material for maintaining soil fertility.

11. There are constant drains upon the farm and the farming communities—money for supplies, interest, part of the taxes, a majority of young people, farmers retiring to the town—all leaving the farm behind. Little comes back. One of the items in rural planning will be to discover whether this one-sided social transaction is inevitable. In a permanent agriculture a balance of trade, so to speak, would be struck.

12. Personal and public health is a factor of the first importance, whether viewed from the angle of personal competency, individual comfort and happiness, costs and wastes of ill health, public dangers from communicable disease, or the obligation to give the next generations the largest possible capital of health. Generally speaking, not only in America but all over the world public health has made far greater progress in recent years in the city than in the country.

13. A wise rural plan will provide farming people with a school system which will give them both adequate

technique of vocational efficiency and a permanent entrance into the world's culture. It will provide for adult education. The worst defect of our present scheme of education is that in youth the study of the schools has too little connection with experience; in adult life experience has too little connection with study. We should correlate the education of both youth and adults with observation, with the episodes of daily life, and with the reading habit. We should seek what Earl Barnes calls "the culture value of daily experience."

14. The rural people have a right to social institutions in the local rural community that are quite as effective for serving their interests and needs as are similar institutions in the towns and cities—good schools, worth-while social and economic organizations, churches of course, whatever social machinery is really necessary to aid farm individuals and families in attaining to the fuller life that farmers should have.

15. Effective social agencies require leaders both professional and voluntary who are personally competent and adequately educated for the service of rural people. Thus encouragement must be given to the development of an indigenous rural leadership. If the farming business and life cannot produce leaders, it cannot maintain itself on high levels.

16. A good rural plan will encourage the organization of farm youth. The 4-H clubs represent a splendid beginning, but we still lack in most parts of

America, and utterly lack in the villages of the Orient, an adequate farm youth movement.

17. Farm women should be far more generally organized both in the West and in the East. There is a fascinating story connected with the rise of the Women's Institutes of Great Britain, and the farm organizations as well as the extension services in America are participating in the new movements on behalf of the home. But there should be much more comprehensive organized outlets for the special interests of rural women and girls.

18. Farmers should be given every opportunity and encouragement for collective action, both in their own interests, and on behalf of the common weal in all aspects of an advancing civilization. The abuse of collective power by farmers is possible, just as it is with other groups. There is always danger of submerging the individual in the mob. True organization of society seeks to encourage individuality but to subordinate individual selfishness.

19. The farmers are to be adequately represented in all political arrangements, local and national, in order that they may secure their rights, fulfil their duties, and meet their privileges as citizens. The farmer has long complained because of the small number of farmers elected to Congress. Quite apart from the issues of good political science involved in occupational or "bloc" representation, there is frankly speaking the doubtful value of the mere presence of farmers, in any legislative

body, for conserving the basic interests of their class. That device may or may not be effective. What we do need in states and in the nation are rural statesmen, men who are solid students of the fundamentals of rural progress, with sufficient political skill to get real results.

20. One of the most subtle and in some respects one of the most nearly insuperable obstacles to rural reform is the fact that the city ignores the country. This spirit manifests itself both in social fact and in popular attitude. The reciprocal attitude on the part of the farmers has been one of suspicion, dislike, perhaps of envy. The present general depression has made the farmers somewhat more generous in their feelings toward other groups, especially toward wage-workers. They observe that the wage-worker unemployed is considerably worse off than the farmer, who is rarely unemployed even if his reward be inadequate. But the depression has caused urban people still more completely to forget the farmer. Thus arises the need for urban-rural co-operation.

21. Finally, I propose the principle that a national plan in any country shall have as its first term the query, What effect will this or that policy have upon the well-being of the farmers? This sounds fantastic no doubt. It is not advanced because agriculture is more important than all other industries, but because it is too important to be neglected or slighted, and over-looking is so easy. The farmers are not in the compact center but on the fringes of organized endeavor.

RELIGION AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

Statesmanship will therefore proceed to make farming and farmers a matter of primary concern.

Once again the question forces itself upon our attention, What place has the church in this area of human activity? Is it interested in these "Twenty-one Demands" of rural planning or in others that may be wiser and more necessary? What influence can it have in bending these practical ends to foster the true welfare of individuals and communities? What provision shall it make for studying these questions from its own angle?

SOCIAL FORCES AND INSTITUTIONS

The reconstruction of the rural life of the world cannot be gained by pronouncements. We are obliged to rely upon certain social forces, and social agencies which utilize these forces. There is no one road to reform. There is no one institution that can perform the miracle. It requires co-operation, co-ordination, integration, a measure of unity.

What are the forces and institutions at the disposal of the rural people? Apparently the same upon which we rely for humanity in general. Science makes its contribution and the farmers are learning everywhere to utilize it. Education is indispensable and must include not alone schools for children and youth, but education continued through life. Organization implies formal co-operation of people for common ends. Laws and public administration provide the authoritative terms by

which individuals and groups may follow their desires in a manner not to interfere with the legitimate purposes of other individuals and groups. And can we omit idealism as a force? Farmers, like other people, seek to know what life means. They too have their standards of beauty and of excellence.

The human institutions that make use of these forces, in varying proportions, are government, schools, voluntary associations, commercialized private agencies, the church and its allies. The peculiar task of the country church is "to maintain and enlarge both individual and community ideals, under the inspiration and guidance of the religious motive, and to help rural people to incarnate these ideals in personal and family life, in industrial effort and political development, and in all social relationships."

Let me remind you that there are no sharp cleavages among these agencies with respect to the use they make of the various social forces. Education as a principle applies to the church and to farmers' associations. Organization as a principle applies to the government and to schools and to private agencies. Religion as a force is not confined to the church; indeed, the greatest task of the church is to generate such power that its ideals will permeate all other agencies and activities.

It is highly important that there be a co-operation amounting to co-ordination among these different forces and agencies, in some well-founded and well-directed plan of rural development. This phase of the matter

RELIGION AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

has been well put by Dr. Dwight Sanderson of Cornell University in a volume prepared for the American Country Life Association a few years ago on *Farm Income and Farm Life*.

"It is essential, therefore, that all those who are seeking to promote rural progress should have a vivid appreciation of the fact that economic and social improvement must be satisfactorily synchronized; that the schoolman, the clergyman, and the welfare worker should understand that satisfactory social institutions cannot be created or maintained with inadequate economic support; but also that agricultural leaders should appreciate that a better farm income will not of itself create higher social values and that these are essential to economic advancement. Rural progress must, therefore, be achieved through a well-rounded program which gives adequate attention to all the more important interests both social and economic and by an intelligent co-operation of persons and organizations in which each attacks a special task but supports the others in working toward a common end."³

RELIGION AND RURAL AFFAIRS

What then does religion have to offer with respect to this complicated, world-wide, pressing problem of improving the conditions, sharpening the intelligence, enlarging the opportunities for rural masses? Well, what do we mean by religion? Is the passionate devotion of Russian youth to the new social order in their country a religion? What can Hinduism do for Indian villagers? Have we in mind organized Christianity? If

³ Sanderson, Dwight, *The Relation of the Farmer to Rural and Urban Groups* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

so, what branch of it? What tenets of the churches are indispensable to the ends we seek?

I have neither the time nor the personal capacity to enter into a thoroughgoing discussion of all that is involved in a satisfactory answer to such questions. For the present purpose I have in mind mainly the spirit and the teaching, the life and the death of the Man of Galilee, who thought of God as Father and of all men as brothers. I see the figure of Jesus himself, as revealer both of the character of God and of the potential character of man, emerging again in full majesty and deep simplicity, pointing us to the infinite value of a human being, to the purpose of life to fare forth toward perfection, to the challenge to expansion of personality by service to fellow-men and if necessary by complete sacrifice, and exemplifying all he taught by all he was, even to crowning his life on the cross.

The Christian religion, at least in aspects such as these, cannot avoid the most intimate relationship with such a significant human movement as rural reconstruction. But what of the church? The critics of the church are too prone to minimize the extent to which the ideals of the church have become warp and woof of the fabric of Western civilization, and that too in spite of the indictment against that civilization that it is neither efficient nor humanized, and that it continues to glorify power, which is pagan, and to scorn sacrificial service, which is so deeply embedded in the religion of Jesus. The church in the West has surely kept alive

the sense of human worth and furnished the soil out of which have grown many of the ideals that still survive the blasts of materialism. In the East, it cannot be gainsaid that Christian missions, ludicrously weak as they appear to be numerically, have transformed indigenous thinking and purpose. It would not be difficult to show that in all parts of the world, the church has participated in or at least inspired many of the newer movements for rural reform, perhaps more largely through the leadership of Christian personalities than as an institution. We must admit, however, that the church as a whole has not had the place of supremacy it should occupy in directing and vitalizing the world movements toward fundamental rural reconstruction.

No doubt there are those within the church itself as well as outside the church who are not persuaded that the church *can* or should be closely related to such movements and such ends as we have been discussing thus far. They would protest that these matters are all "secular." If they are secular—non-religious—it is because we have made them so. If we desire a Christian rural civilization, we must settle issues such as these we have been discussing in terms of the mind of Christ for human living. These problems are the material upon which the Christ spirit must work, to leaven them with the yeast of God's purpose for mankind. Walter Rauschenbusch put the issue in this fashion: "The Kingdom of God continued to be the center of all his (Jesus') teaching." It is "still a collective conception, involv-

ing the whole life of man. It is not a matter of saving human atoms, but of saving the social organism. It is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven."

The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council was in session on the Mount of Olives at the Eastertide four years ago. The opening sentences of the Council's statement concerning the Christian mission in relation to rural problems in Asia and Africa is so fully applicable to all the continents that I wish to transcribe them, taking the liberty to substitute the word "Christian" for the word "missionary." "The one inclusive purpose of the Christian enterprise is to present Jesus Christ to men and women the world over as their Redeemer and to win them for entrance into the joy of his discipleship. In this endeavor we realize that man is a unity, and that his spiritual life is indivisibly rooted in all his conditions—physical, mental, and social. We are therefore desirous that the program of Christian work among all peoples may be sufficiently comprehensive to serve the whole man in every aspect of his life and relationships." "The service demanded of the church everywhere—East and West—is to lead in the effort to build a rural civilization that shall be Christian to the core."

It is not necessary to make an elaborate program out of Christ's teachings, but it is vital to take abiding principles and set them up as guides. Believing or not

believing in a God who is our Father makes a difference. Believing or not believing in the effectiveness of good will and the possibilities of human brotherhood makes a difference. Believing or not believing that all economic, political, and social arrangements should have as their main objective the essential good of all human beings does make a difference.

Once more I stress the importance of regarding the Christian enterprise as far more inclusive than the organized church. It not only includes many organizations that are complementary, though relatively independent, like the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association. But the Christian enterprise is the whole effort to spiritualize all the activities of life and the hearts of all people in terms of the spirit of Christ. Thus the Christian enterprise is partly intangible, the general movement to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven. It means permeation, a way of life for individuals and social groupings. It also has its tangible aspects through many social agencies that are motivated by the Christian teachings. The church as an organization need not always participate in reconstructing society, but Christians themselves must participate in the task of making a Christ-like world. It is indeed their main business.

Let us then be thankful for all organizations that inculcate high principles and try to live up to them even though the association does not profess to be religious. Consider, for example, the Boy Scouts, the

Rotarians, the fraternal organizations—are they deluded or hypocritical in their professed aims, or are they really religious? The agricultural co-operative society is an organization for economic ends. It exists to buy or sell to greater advantage to its members than would be the case if the individuals composing it dealt through the ordinary commercial channels. But there is far more to co-operation than this. Even in the business aims there are moral and spiritual values. Loyalty, honesty, promptness, acquiescence in leadership, a score of homely virtues are almost essential to success in co-operation. In countries where co-operation has long been practiced it has become a sort of religion in the sense that the interests of the individual become absorbed in the common good. Sometimes the common good becomes a passion.

Beyond all these aspects of co-operation is the fundamental philosophy of it. Individualism, the lone farmer working purely for himself, must pass. What shall take its place? The landlord with his benevolent ruralism, the farm corporation with its impersonal character, socialism in a form let us say of land nationalization? I am committed to the philosophy that the co-operative agrarian society should be the inclusive social purpose of all rural reform. And a co-operative society at its best and fullest will be so nearly a Christian civilization that we need not trouble about labels.

Nothing that can be set up as a challenge to the church to supply ideals and energy to these rural social

reforms and institutions should make us oblivious of the basic function of the church to serve as a means of the cure of souls, as an ark of comfort. Whether in poverty or in prosperity, each individual has his difficulties, limitations, sorrows, disappointments, burdens, sins. The church which fails to meet the individual at the point of his deepest needs cannot be said to incarnate the spirit of Him who invited those that labor and are heavy laden to come to Him. In times of depression in a great agricultural country like ours, as well as in meeting the outcastes of India, this successful mission of the church as the comforter of the human spirit is a major achievement.

The church in mission lands also illustrates what was an outstanding feature of the primitive church but which in Western countries has been lessened if not lost—the church as a fellowship. I am not thinking merely of sociables and church suppers but of a band of brethren inspired by the deepest challenges of humanity and conscious of the peculiar bond between them. Doubtless this spirit is frequently found, but I fear it is not dominant. Much may be made of the enormous increase of fellowship organizations outside the church, but their multiplicity and strength and activity seem to indicate the partial failure of the church at this point.

We have been so accustomed to think of church membership as depending upon the expression or acceptance of certain beliefs and the culmination of a personal ex-

perience, that we have often failed to sense the mission of the church to help lead its members throughout life into constantly deeper understanding of the full meaning of the Christian religion. The preacher is still largely the proclaimer rather than the teacher. Rarely does a theological seminary stress pedagogy in its curriculum as it does stress public speaking. Is the preacher a good talker? That is the usual question. I like the phrase used by a friend of mine who defines joining the church as registering in the school of life. Whether in China or in America, this educational function of the church is one of its most significant possibilities in dealing with rural people.

Like all other ages in the world's history, we are inclined to stone our prophets. But the church can have no vitality unless it serves as a school of the prophets. It may almost be said that the power of the country church in America can be measured by the extent to which its ministers are fearless interpreters of what they regard as the will of God for rural humanity. There is a notion abroad that the prophet is a sort of wild radical or a kind of soothsayer. The Hebrew prophets were fearless politicians. Some of them condemned the existing priesthood. They criticized kings. They pleaded the cause of righteousness. They withstood the encroachments of the privileged. They stood for the rights of the underprivileged.

We have stressed the function of the church as a comforter. But the church should never be comfortable.

It should be a crusader. It cannot be true to itself, if it sits comfortably in an easy-chair of reflection even about the deep things of life. Our rural church will completely lose its grip unless it can participate in a long, vigorous campaign designed to give the people on the land both the incentive and the opportunity for rightness of life.

What is the underlying objective of present-day rural reform? It is in a way a blind reaching for something better, on the part of great masses of men and women, most of them living under untoward conditions. It is the privilege of the Christian religion to give direction to the movement and to define its goal. The place of religion in rural reconstruction is to lead in the effort toward an adequate rural civilization. From the Christian point of view obviously no civilization is adequate unless it is genuinely Christian.

Says Professor Cooley, "It should, then, be the aim of religious leadership to clarify and illustrate our larger human purposes and bind them together as a whole." We now ask the Christian enterprise to understand, to interpret, to enkindle, and to guide the urge of the rural billion for a deeper personal living and a fairer social order.

THE AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

THE APPROACH WE HAVE MADE TO THE CONSIDERATION of the country church problem may have seemed not only long but tortuous, perhaps labyrinthine. Why these excursions into economic and social questions? Why wander in the fields, while the church stands with open doors, as if with outstretched arms pleading that we enter within her gates and in the quiet of the place set apart for worship there confer about the oracles of God?

Because it is idle to consider the instrument unless we know its use. Lamely no doubt, but with good intent we have been trying to compass the task of the Christian enterprise. If the church is to command the forces bent on marching toward a fairer social order for rural folk, we must have at least a sketch map of the territory to be occupied. This we have been en-

deavoring to make in the two previous lectures that have set forth some aspects of the rural problem and pointed out some of the agencies and forces on which we must rely and with which the church must co-operate as she seeks to reform human persons and to transform human society. We cannot safely ignore all this material if we are serious in our interest and firm in our will with respect to the deepest welfare of the rural population. We now proceed to study the church itself, as it is and as we would like to see it, a church no longer content to be merely a conserving force, but determined and prepared to lead the way toward a more satisfying farm life.

THE RURAL CHURCH SITUATION

Statistics do not furnish a final test of the value of any spiritual agency, but they cannot be disregarded. A few outstanding facts are taken largely from the recent admirable study, *The United States Looks at Its Churches*, by Dr. Fry of the Institute of Social and Religious Research. Fifty-two per cent of the rural population belongs to the church while fifty-eight of the city population is found in church membership. The rural church averages a trifle less than 100 members per church of the age of thirteen years or over—and its expenditures are \$13.27 per year for each member. The city church averages 433 members and spends \$21.50 per member. Dr. Fry comments to the effect that the contributions in rural churches significantly follow the trend of farm values. The number of rural

churches in the whole country is 167,864; the number of urban churches, 64,290. During the past twenty years there probably has been an increase in the number of rural churches. There are 132,426 Sunday schools in rural territory with a total membership of 12,000,000, including officers and teachers.

Country church leaders have accepted a standard to the effect that not more than one church is needed for 1,000 population; that would seem to be conservative. When persons under thirteen years of age and those who can probably never be interested in a church are subtracted from this reckoning, there would be left, speaking optimistically, perhaps 500 adults available as church members. But we now have one rural church to 240 rural people of all ages. There are many communities that have four or five churches for each thousand people. While the average membership of rural churches is less than one hundred, there are thousands of rural churches with less than fifty members. Probably not more than half the church membership can be depended on for regular attendance or activity. I am informed that some detailed studies of many rural communities in various regions of the United States indicate that, if only Protestant, resident, and active church members are counted, probably only twenty per cent or less of the farmers should be regarded as churchmen.

The majority of ministers of rural churches receive a salary far less than that required for a minimum standard of living. Half of them have had an academic

training less than that of either college or seminary. Short pastorates are the rule. There can be no leadership, no aggressive church program, no community building, under such conditions. The function of the minister reduces itself to preaching a sermon on Sunday, conducting an occasional wedding, and burying the dead. "Enthusiasm in many of the country churches of North Carolina is gone, hope is waning, members are leaving, and the churches are dying."¹

Denominational competition has not yet run its course. It shows itself, not so much in planting new churches where they are not needed, as in giving financial aid and official countenance to churches that are no longer needed.

Passing now from these few significant facts, we find that a frank analysis of the encouraging and discouraging features the rural church situation was made at the North American Home Missions Congress held in Washington in December, 1930. A short summary of the report of the Commission on Comity and Co-operation brought out such statements as these: That one community in seven in rural America has no church, yet there are three churches to every thousand people in rural parts; in cities there is one church to a thousand people. Thus both rural overchurching and underchurching prevail. The report calls attention to progress in co-operation, through the abandonment of

¹ Ormond, Jesse Marvin, *The Country Church in North Carolina* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press).

churches due to local situations, the increasing number of exchanges of fields, definite adoption of the recognized principles of comity, the growth of federated, community, and union churches now aggregating 2,000, most of them in rural places. It is interesting to know that since the organization of the United Church of Canada over 2,000 formerly unchurched areas are now provided with churches. Some of the difficulties in the way of adjustment of competitive situations were revealed, such as divergence in church polity and government, sometimes church doctrine, reaction toward rituals, the elusive attitudes of the people themselves with respect to loyalty to tradition. It was asserted that a serious, even tragic, and yet a remediable hindrance to co-operation is the persistence of home mission aid to churches in highly competitive situations rather than to those far more useful churches that have sole responsibility in the community.

Attention was called to progress in interdenominational organizations and especially to the work of the Home Missions Council itself, which among other things has worked out a set of comity principles for the town and country field that have been adopted by the boards of a number of important denominations, and has also laid down some principles regarding local adjustments. The report makes the very important suggestions that the time seems to be ripe for a bureau of survey and investigation, permanently at the disposal of church bodies for studying nation-wide problems and trends,

and for the development of joint-service bureaus and activities and the possibility of having an integrated staff serving the rural church on behalf of all denominations.

In an address to the Congress Dr. Brunner, who has a recognized position of leadership in scientific and sympathetic study of the rural church problem, made some assertions that are unquestionably true but somewhat disturbing to complacency. He said that a recent study of more than 150 local areas, including 3,000 churches which were studied ten years ago, shows no betterment in the situation. The open country is about half as well evangelized as the village in spite of the fact that these open country communities average nearly ten churches each. In general, home mission aid is administered to competitive churches. The weaker one-church fields are poorly supported and poorly manned. The competitive fields have better-trained men and larger grants-in-aid. He quoted Dr. Douglass, an authority on church federation, as saying that Protestants almost never co-operate to be reasonable or brotherly but almost always where there is some advantage or pressure. Then Dr. Brunner asks, "Why does this situation continue?" He answers: "It continues chiefly for two reasons: In the first place, too large a majority of our church administrators are utterly unmindful of the operation of social forces like enlarging community boundaries, shifting populations, and the like. They are more concerned with churches than with needs, with

the problems of organization than with the problem of people and areas. In the second place, competition continues because, with all honor to the exceptions, most denominational administrators wish it to continue or lack the courage to deal with competition in any statesmanlike way."

One of the severest criticisms of the present country church situation is the financial aspect of overchurching. Roughly speaking, probably 50,000 churches would render far better service than the present 160,000 and would cost no more, perhaps less. But efficiency in service and cost of maintenance are real issues. It is fair to suppose that, for example, one strong, active, commanding church in the local community will tap even greater resources than will four or five small, ineffective churches, provided the people of the community feel that the church really belongs to them and is indispensable to them.

I am told that even in some areas where church federation has made some headway, the rural churches are slipping back because denominations do not yet "get together at the top"; and even that officials representing denominational bodies centering in the great cities ignore the efforts at comity and "steam-roller their programs down over the state," thus slowing up progress in serious fashion. If we had instruments delicate enough to weigh even the unconscious motives of men, it would be interesting to use them in discovering how much of denominationalism springs from the very human

but not altogether lovely desire for power and prestige, both personal and institutional.

*What Is Right with the Rural Church*² is the title of a valuable little book which has scores of illustrations of successful rural churches with progressive pastors, active laymen, and often communities with co-operating churches. Dr. Brunner himself is the author of books describing successful rural churches. We must take account now of further hopeful aspects of our problem.

SIGNS OF PROMISE

The Roosevelt Country Life Commission took a stand concerning the importance of the country church that can be said to mark the launching of a nation-wide country church movement. The commission said:

"Any consideration of the problem of rural life that leaves out of account the function and the possibilities of the church, and of related institutions, would be grossly inadequate. In the last analysis the country life problem is a moral problem. In the best development of the individual the great motives and results are religious and spiritual. The time has arrived when the church must take a larger leadership, both as an institution and through its pastors."

The first denomination to grasp the significance of this utterance was the Presbyterian, which set apart a man who has come to be one of the foremost American prophets of religion in country life, Warren H. Wilson.

² By Ralph Felton (Philadelphia, Pa.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1930).

At the very beginning he emphasized a parish plan and community work, began to assemble churches of adjoining neighborhoods into natural communities, established summer schools for the rural clergy, and through this effective department as well as by means of important books and stimulating lectures has led in raising the problem of the American rural church to a place of significant interest.

At present nearly all the major denominations have rural church departments. All over the land there are projects for demonstration parishes, conferences, and schools, an increasing and abundant literature growing out of the labors of the men in these departments. The attitude of two denominations is of special significance because both have been essentially urban churches. The Protestant Episcopal Church in a recent report to its national gathering called attention to a number of steps that have been taken during the past few years in forwarding rural work, and went farther than has any other denomination by passing resolutions looking toward a rural church foundation. The Roman Catholic Church has for years carried on rural conferences, and some of the deepest wisdom and finest pronouncements concerning the rural church problem have come from this source. Last autumn one of the prominent periodicals of the Roman Church, *The Commonweal*, had as the theme of its leading editorial, "The Problem of Problems." It dealt entirely with the need to strengthen the church in rural areas and to help the

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

farmers out of their difficulties, and called efforts in this direction a "great crusade." The editorial closed with these words:

"The Catholic Church must always think of the future. And all Catholics, lay as well as clerical, are the church. So far as the United States is concerned, unless the Catholics of today do really think about the future, and unless that thinking leads them back to the earth, there will be no roots, there will be no future, humanly speaking there will be few Catholic churches in the United States a hundred years from now."

The paper also announced a series of articles "dealing with many aspects of this tremendous problem."

The theological seminaries were tardy in meeting the need for specially trained pastors in rural churches, yet today there are scores of the seminaries that are at least giving attention to this matter, and a few of them are grappling firmly with the task of building a course of study adequate to the need.

Some years ago the Federal Council of Churches had a committee on the rural church which among other activities held a successful rural church conference in Columbus, Ohio, and made a pronouncement which was pioneering and probably important seed-sowing. In its work of research, the Council gives careful attention to rural trends and its summaries of conditions, literature, and movements are invaluable. About a half dozen states have organized State Federations or Councils. In Ohio, Pennsylvania, and California rural work has

been forwarded; church consolidations have taken place, and the education of the public to the needs of the rural churches has been pressed. Massachusetts a number of years ago organized a rural church department of its effective Federation of Churches and under able leadership has carried on significant service.

For a quarter of a century, both the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association have carried on work for rural youth in a difficult field. They have tried to serve country youth without buildings and equipment, while city youth find buildings and equipment often elaborate and always enticing.

The Home Missions Council during recent years has easily taken the lead among all organizations in the United States in studying the rural church situation and in challenging the entire American church to give attention.

In the summer of 1908 the Massachusetts Agricultural College offered a summer school for country clergymen. This was probably the first attempt by the agricultural colleges to enter this field and indeed this school was perhaps the first in the country to offer country clergymen studies in subjects not strictly ecclesiastical. A considerable number of schools of this sort have now become an accepted part of the offerings of agricultural colleges, and recently the University of Wisconsin has made it possible for rural ministers to do graduate work during short periods.

The advance that has been made in methods of studying rural communities and the relation of the churches to them is a notable gain. Today no church pastor can give a legitimate excuse for not knowing his community. But more than that, fundamental research has been undertaken directly on rural church problems by the Institute of Social and Religious Research, and by the agricultural colleges with respect to the social structure and institutions of rural areas. These operations together with the activities of denominational rural church departments have given us a large body of authentic literature. Thus conditions are well understood and needed constructive measures are fairly well agreed to.

A few years ago the American Country Life Association devoted an entire session to rural religion, endeavoring, not too successfully, to keep the discussion in the realm of the significance of religion in rural life rather than on the agencies or institutions of religion; at any rate this pioneering organization succeeded in attracting national attention to the entire question. Canada has its rural church problem, and through the Board of Home Missions of their United Church has, in ways very similar to those we have already described for the United States, advanced the cause of the country church. It is interesting to know that the movement for church union in Canada originated very largely in the demand of the farmers of Western Canada for the elimination of local denominational competition.

The great gain of these recent years is a substantial agreement by the leaders of the country church movement on many vital points, such as the function of the church to serve all the people of the community, the value of surveys to determine actual conditions, the need of eliminating the competitive overlapping of over-churched areas, the equal need of eliminating neglectful overlooking in underchurched areas, the imperative necessity of an adequately and specially trained ministry, the correlation of the religious interests of the rural town and the open country that surrounds it, the indispensableness of the community parish. Moreover, for the pursuit of ends such as these, there is increasing co-operation among the leaders themselves.

In two respects at least there has not been an equal gain, and both of these still stand as serious barriers to the progress of the American town and country church. It is doubtful if a single denomination has as yet taken the country church problem seriously, in the sense of fully implementing the principles already agreed to by its country church advocates, or instructing its various boards and officials to co-operate with other denominations in vigorous measures for carrying principles of comity into practical effect in the local parishes. The other failure to gain appreciably is found in the attitude of laymen, the unwillingness of multitudes to give up local connections and join forces with other groups. Farm life breeds institutional as well as personal individualism.

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

This review of the American rural church situation, incomplete and brief as it is, reveals a degree of progress and a grasp of fundamental needs that is encouraging. Nevertheless, set over against the facts mentioned earlier in this lecture, measured by the economic and social changes of the American countryside, assessed in terms of overwhelming rural needs, faced with the menace of a general national apathy about the church and even religion itself, compelled to work under the shadow of a negligent urbanism—I say, with all these considerations before us, the church can ill afford to be complacent. The watchmen on the walls are not happy. The men at the front are deeply concerned. Here are the deliberately chosen words of the man who more than any other just now leads the rural church forces in a vigorous advance—Dr. W. R. King of the Home Missions Council, a native of the state in which these lectures are being given. Dr. King says in a private letter:

“The country church is in the greatest crisis of its history in America. It is having to make its first great readjustment in this country due to the *revolutionary* changes that have taken place in recent years.

“The country church of yesterday will not serve the present day. It must adapt itself to modern conditions and situations or rapidly pass out of existence.

“The country churches were started when the country was young. Their organizations, programs, and methods of work were laid out in days that are gone and to meet needs and conditions that have passed. They served well

those times, but they must now change to meet the new age in which we are living.

"The country church is still needed. It has today as great a chance as it ever had. In some ways it has a greater opportunity to serve the country people, and to build up real religion and the Kingdom of God, than it had in former days. But it must adapt itself to the new rural life."

THE COUNTRY PASTOR

The minister is the most important factor in the effective rural church. We shall discuss the concrete work of this man in another lecture, but some principles are to be emphasized here. He should at least be the equal in capacity of the county agent or the school principal. For requisite leadership the local church needs a pastor of real talent, of adequate training, and of rural-mindedness. In education, in sheer ability, in power of leadership, he should be a commanding figure in the community.

In theory the pastor's function is to preach; in practice he is often something of a chore boy. Neither is adequate. The minister is the leader of his church in a service to the entire community. He will preach, of course; he will also teach; he may organize. He will be a friend and a true pastor. He will be a wise counselor and will have many calls for practical assistance. But his inclusive task is to project the essential message of the religion of Jesus into all the individual and the collective life of the community.

The preacher should be a specialist or authority. On

what? On religion, of course. But what does this include? The preacher should be able to give satisfactory answers to such questions as, What are the essentials of the religion of Jesus? What are the necessities in building a Christian personal character? What are the requirements in erecting a Christian local community? What are the marks of a Christian rural civilization?

There needs to be a formulation of the function and the technique of the pastor as life counselor, and provision for the required training and acquaintance with its methods in order that both church school and church may supplement the public school and other agencies in the ministering of life-wisdom to rural folk. The care and the cure of souls is a major privilege of the Christian pastor.

The rural clergyman should have an education suitable for his particular needs, not in any sense of narrowness but in respect of breadth. He should know the rural problem from the angle of the relationship of the Christian religion to it. Any course of study or any apprenticeship that will give him this knowledge is essential in his training. The American town and country church movement must begin to rid itself of the criticism, perfectly just, that the country church is inadequately manned. There is need of far more adequate provision for the enlistment and the proper education of pastors to meet the new ideas of the town and country church. Both agricultural colleges and rural departments of normal colleges are good but unexplored re-

cruiting ground for rural pastors. In the agricultural college the student presumably will have prepared himself in the various aspects of the rural question. In the normal college he will have acquired the attitude of the teacher. These two assets are quite as important for the rural pastor as theology or homiletics.

The continuing education of pastors requires the co-operation of the churches. There must be a passing of the assumption too often held by laymen, that when a pastor has finished his schooling he is permanently and sufficiently educated for his task. Every rural pastor should have leave of absence at least every alternate summer, for a period of two to six weeks, without loss of salary, in order to study at approved summer schools. We need basic provision for consistent and adequate reading. Lack of libraries is one of the country clergyman's handicaps.

The question of salary of the rural preacher is one of utmost importance and difficulty. It has already been said that the country preacher should be as well educated and of quite as high caliber as the head of the schools or the head of the county agricultural extension service. He should be paid sufficiently for release from anxiety about his income, that he may be able to build up his library and subscribe to periodicals, that he may attend conferences and summer schools—to say nothing of a reasonable standard of living for his family. The main financial difficulties are the competition of small churches which if combined could pay a good salary,

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

the unwillingness of farmers to concede a standard of living in terms of money income that is above the average of farmers themselves, and the question as to how far many rural communities are financially able to support their church.

One of the most subtle drawbacks in the rural pastorate is lack of recognition. Neither theological seminaries, nor denominational officials, nor church boards, nor even church conferences pay sufficient tribute to the dignity and significance of the permanent rural pastorate. By most of the seminaries rural pastorates are regarded as stepping-stones, laboratories of apprenticeship, or a refuge for the obsolescent. Even in seminaries that are giving attention to the training of rural pastors it is doubtful if students who are frankly preparing for a city pastorate gain an adequate conception of rural work. Rural pastors are not the leaders in determining denominational or national policies or programs for the rural church. At the best the rural pastor is isolated, very much "on his own," rather apart from church councils. His problems may be no more trying than those of the city pastor, but they are less subject to common counsel and encouragement. There ought to be a keener *esprit de corps* among rural pastors. The country pastorate should be regarded as a distinct and highly honored profession with recognition of and provision for its special problems, needs, techniques, knowledges, skills, sources of inspiration. The country church must furnish a career to capable men.

The country pastorate is one to draw out the resources of virile characters and able minds; strong men can find ample opportunity for permanent service.

THE LAYMAN

When we use the word church we may mean various things. "The church" is a world-wide social institution; or it is a particular local organization. Gatherings of officials, pastors, delegates, at times represent the church to the world; they pass resolutions, organize campaigns on behalf of the church. When preachers speak either in the pulpit or elsewhere they are supposed to speak for the church. After all, the church, local or universal, is the body of people who belong to it. The laymen are the church. Any leadership of the church that fails to mobilize either the opinions or the activities of the majority of the church members can be only partially successful.

Up to the present time such progress as has come in the American country church movement has issued from the top. It is the result of the vision and devotion of a comparatively small group of leaders, the advance guard of a better day. One must not do injustice to the lay members of those churches in the several hundred communities where federations or union or the community church have been successful. Oftentimes these men and women have surrendered much-loved connections, sacrificed sacred memories, and sought in a wide Christian fellowship the most effective Christian service

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

for the community. But in the large, the farmers have not been alive to the country church problem.

I see no satisfactory future for the American town and country church unless the laymen, particularly leading farmers and village business men, take hold of this question with as much vigor and intelligence and determination as have gone, for example, into the development and maintenance of the great farmers' organizations like the Grange and the Farm Bureau. Perhaps the time has arrived for the organization of an American "Christian Farmers' League," for the fellowship of a sort that bands rural laymen together in constructive thinking about the Christian way of building rural civilization and that mobilizes their capacities and interests on behalf of Christian progress.

It is not easy to tell just what effect the present long-continued farm depression is having upon the attitude of farmers toward the church. I quote from a private letter: "Economic conditions have had a blighting effect upon the psychology of the rural dwellers and few of them have been able to look forward to a program which will lift the community generally."

On the other hand, there are evidences that the depression has driven the naturally religious farmer into still deeper religious convictions, though it is increasingly difficult to support the church as now organized. Some interesting reactions from farmers on this point will be found in later pages.³

³ See Postscript, p. 232.

Church activities usually have to do with the church maintaining itself internally or with its external affairs as an organization. But it is quite possible that the largest influence of the church will be found in the attitudes and activities of its members in their other group relationships. For we must think of members of churches as individuals who carry their religion into other group connections in business, in politics, in fraternal organizations. Indeed, if this is not the case, the church and the religion which it is supposed to foster can hardly become vital in the world's life. The leadership of the local church, therefore, is to be found not alone or chiefly in its activities as an organization, although it should be most active in community life. Its greatest influence comes because it has succeeded in informing the minds of its members concerning the ways by which religion may be connected with community life and has inspired them to carry out into the day's work and into all community relationships that spirit of irrepressible, aggressive good will which perhaps more than any other characteristic expresses the mind of Christ.

The same thought holds with regard to the influence of the church in national and world affairs. It cannot take the place of other organizations. It may play a part as one among them. The church can rarely participate in movements that are essentially political, but the body of Christians cannot stay out of politics without surrender of the very idea of the Kingdom of God.

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

The time has come when the church in order to take this leadership, fully to express itself in our social life, and to bring its influence to bear upon the rural problem, must have a national organization of some sort. It might be a federation or amalgamation of existing agencies, such as the Federal Council of Churches, the Home Missions Council, and other bodies. At any rate, we need an American town and country church body that represents the whole range of impact of the religion of Christ upon the personal and social life and problems of our rural folk.

There has been practically no consideration of another important place of lay leadership, that of "lay preaching." It is quite possible that herein lies one of the main avenues of more fruitful rural church work. The subject at least merits thorough study and a measure of experiment. There is pressing need of careful, authenticated educational service for training lay helpers in the varied activities that the church may foster, such as teaching in the church school, the interests of missions, and so on. This service will have to be carried on by local churches or by state organizations divided into practicable districts, but the problem requires co-ordinated study, planning, and a propagandizing agency. The need for it is even more important relatively than in the city. There is in the country less potential leadership probably, and certainly there are fewer trained leaders. There could be laymen's classes in the local church as a distinct and recognized phase of continuing educa-

tion in the church. There might be larger institutes of several days' duration in the less busy season for the farmers. The city-country area might well be the region of activity in this field. This whole problem is too large and complicated for spasmodic effort; it should be put on a well-organized national basis.

The colleges can assist in preparing lay leaders for the church. At some of our agricultural colleges steps have been taken during the past decade to supply this need, but these efforts are still inadequate. The graduates of agricultural colleges, and especially those who attend these colleges for short periods, should be given the most inspiring opportunities for getting ready to assist in the community work of the local church.

Normal colleges that are training rural teachers have an obligation of the same sort. It is true that the call upon the day-school teachers for work in connection with the church is adding a burden, but who are so well adapted for teaching in the church as those trained to teach in the school?

The "church colleges" can be of real service. If a census of farm homes and rural towns and villages were taken for the purpose of discovering how many of the men and women living in them had been students at one of these church colleges, the number would be astonishingly large. Doctors, lawyers, business men and their wives, many farmers too and farmers' wives, would be found in this list. They are material for "continuing education" under local college leadership.

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

CONTINUING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

During recent years there have been many changes in Sunday school methods. The subject of religious education has taken on many new phases, but not enough has been done in adapting this work to the needs of rural communities. Certain church bodies and devoted leaders have attempted to reconstruct the outlooks and the facilities for rural religious training and for giving rural children and youth a fair measure of religious nurture. The material to be used, the training of teachers, indeed all of the factors, should be far more fully developed with reference to the needs of the rural people. We require many places of adequate study and experiment in the field of education in religion for both young and old in the rural churches.

In this connection I wish mainly to make a plea for a systematic effort to give the American country church leadership in the great movement for adult or continuing education. We are all gradually getting rid of the idea that education stops with the schools. Practical men have often contended that the schools were out of touch with real life and that a man's education came chiefly through his daily experiences. Between these two extremes of complete reliance upon the schools and of disdain for them, we are finding our way into the idea that education must be organized as a continuing process through life. We are no longer content to systematize teaching in the schools or the colleges, and then let the individual drift intellectually as he may in

future years. We seek to provide both means and incentive for systematic and progressive education that shall continue through life.

Fortunately the farmers have not been left out of account in this new movement. European countries long ago made provision for popularizing science in its relation to agriculture. They went farther than that and taught the people how to co-operate. In our country, beginning at least with George Washington, there has been a progressive development of facilities for popular education in agriculture, and for nearly two decades now we have had in operation one of the largest and most effective schemes of adult education in the world, namely, our "co-operative extension service in agriculture and home economics." Some farmers think it has been too effective in increasing production beyond the needs of the market! Our system of continuing education for farmers has still great developments before it.

But I am thinking just now of the place of the church in this work. At present it seems to be a very small place. It should be a very large place. Probably we cannot realize how large a factor the country church may become in this work unless we accept a distinction that is made clear in the following quotation:⁴

"Religious education therefore is to be sharply dis-

⁴ Winchester, Benjamin S., *The Church and Adult Education* (New York: Harper & Bros.).

tinguished from education in religion, the pursuit of courses of study in the Bible, in biblical doctrines, in missions, theology or comparative religions. It is rather the bringing of religious experience—faith, worship, effort, fellowship—to bear upon the ordinary, and extraordinary, situations of life, in order that one may meet them manfully, hopefully, and helpfully, his outlook enlarged by the consciousness of oneness which his fellow-men everywhere, and his energies guided and reinforced by the spiritual forces of the universe.”

Two related needs are thus set before us. The one has to do with more effective provision for the education of youth for the religious life, making accessible to them the riches of religious experience. This suggests more efficient rural Sunday schools, daily vacation Bible schools, and the like. The other need is that of making the country church the center of a scheme of education for both young and old, available throughout life, that seeks to measure all the issues of both individual and social life by the standards of Jesus.

In his lectures on this Foundation three years ago, Dr. Ellwood⁵ put so cogently the general principle I have been trying to state, that I wish to quote a few sentences that have a special bearing upon this educational task of the American rural church. He says:

“It is evident that in the case of knowledge of physical nature a few experts can apply such knowledge and all the people can profit; but in the case of social, political,

⁵ Ellwood, Charles A., *Man's Social Destiny* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press.)

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

moral, and religious knowledge the people themselves must act upon it."

"What sort of progress we shall be able to show in the immediate future largely, if not wholly, depends upon the sort of education given to the mass of the people."

"We must set the church to educate both youth and adults into Christ's way of life."

I must hasten to make clear a conviction that education alone is not sufficient for the human soul. Purpose, spirit, attitude, are the heart of a good life. Conversion is somewhere in the process of character-building usually an essential step, whatever its form, its manifestations, or its symbols, and whether or not always consciously recognized by the man himself who changes direction or at least accepts the way to the full life. But education as a method remains indispensable to understanding, progress, growth, fruition.

I should like to propose that a group composed of biblical scholars, agricultural scientists in the fields of technology, economics, and sociology, successful country preachers, and able farmers, be set to work to make a serious attempt to edit a "Farmers' Bible Commentary," designed chiefly as a basis for continued education in the churches, of the type that we have just been discussing. There is in the Bible not only a wealth of allusion to country life, but the direct application of the teachings of some of the prophets, of Paul, and of course of Jesus himself, to present-day personal and social problems of farm people could be made both interesting and effective.

CITY AND COUNTRY CO-OPERATION

There is grave danger that in our zeal for the rural church we may aid in creating the impression among city populations that we have here something important but distant, something half-foreign to urban interests, something that seeks aid as a beggar might, a subject of philanthropy. We surely must not encourage an attitude, all too prevalent in our cities, of neglect or of condescension. Farmers no doubt hold some erroneous ideas about the city, although it is probable that the farm knows the city better than the city knows the farm. Farmers too often feel that they have no special concern with the scandalous conditions that are repeatedly revealed by investigations in our great cities. Cities complain because they are not given their full measure of freedom on account of the country vote in the legislature. Antagonism rather than co-operation characterizes too large a share of urban-rural relationships. This antagonism is partly ignorance, partly clash of interests.

The need of urban co-operation with the rural church should be clearly understood and universally accepted by both interests. May I specify in a few particulars? The Christian church does not sufficiently follow its young members from the country to the city. Can we not discover a method by which the young people who migrate from one place to another can at once feel at home in the new environment? The city church also has a "stake" in the rural church on account of this

constant influx of young people to the city. They have been going in by the thousands, even by the hundreds of thousands. What happens to them? It is scarcely too much to assert that the city church could afford to support the country church, as insurance for itself and the welfare of the city.

"If a due proportion of the wealth of the city should be wisely used in supplying the needs of the country people, particularly in social and religious affairs, it would go a long way toward the prevention of serious results for all of society. Such help rendered the country by the city could by no means be considered a mere charity, but rather as an equitable division of benefits because of service rendered. It would not be a benefaction but the payment of a debt."⁶

The important question of a minimum salary for rural preachers has received considerable attention from various church bodies, but does not seem to have been taken up very seriously by the laity. How to organize in America a plan of standard salaries, somewhat similar to that followed in countries with an established church, is evidently not an easy problem. One may express grave doubt whether we shall get ahead very satisfactorily in providing adequate leadership for the American town and country church until we discover a method of applying in practical fashion the principle of a minimum and a fair salary for rural ministers who meet reasonable tests of training, capacity, and service.

⁶ Ormond, Jesse Marvin, *The Country Church in North Carolina*, p. 349 (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press).

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

This question might be met better than it is now if there were a new type of planning for the church by which the town and country church becomes an organic part of regional or area church co-operation. If we are to come, as we should, to a form of planning for the mutual interests of city and country by which the small and medium-sized cities co-operate fully with the rural communities within their trading areas, then the rural community parishes should be correlated with the city churches in some distinct fashion and on an even basis.

The establishment of a city-country church area should make it easy for Christian farmers and Christian business men and wage earners to meet "around the table" for the consideration of the mutual problems of the service of the churches within the area. It might easily lead to helpful discussions of the economic and social interrelationships between rural and urban people, which after all should be approached and settled on a Christian basis. There seem to be natural economic antagonisms as well as social cleavages between such groups as business leaders of industry, finance, merchandizing, transport, wage workers, traders ("middlemen") and the farmers. But there are also basic interests in common. Perhaps better than any other agency the Christian Church could be the medium of reconciliation and co-operation.

The town and country church should have adequate representation in all church movements or other activities designed to forward the Christian enterprise.

Rural representation is fundamental in any effective country church movement. Both the clergy and the laity from the rural churches should not merely be invited but almost compelled to participate in the common tasks of the church.

City churchmen can discuss with farm churchmen ways and means of social justice to the farmers. It is not alone in the church that the countryman is overlooked. An examination of the personnel of governmental bodies, of peace agencies, of social reform groups, reveals the almost complete absence of the names of persons who represent rural interests. Not infrequently when there is representation it is not by a farmer but by some ruralist keen for helping farmers but not himself representative of them.

The relationships between labor and agriculture need much more co-operative and intelligent common study than they have ever had before. At first thought their interests seem to be completely antagonistic, and in a measure they are. The laborer wants cheap food, the farmer wants to sell his products for the highest possible price. The laborer wants high wages, wages are the major factor in the cost of manufactured products, while the farmer wants to buy those products as cheaply as possible. But it is precisely because of these economic antagonisms, that there is need of a common understanding. If it is proved impossible to put differences of interest like these on a Christian basis, then we may as well admit that all hope for Christianizing

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

economic relationships is purely wishful thinking if not sheer sentimentalism.

The mutual interests of city and country in maintaining a strong rural church are vital and not sentimental. Vital, because of the constant migration from country to city, because of the potential leadership for the Christian enterprise that lies in country parishes, and because only by union of country and city interests can the Christian enterprise go forward as it should. The church does poor service to the rural people if it permits them to consider only their own interests. Farmers are citizens of the country. They should play their full part in helping to solve many of these public issues.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE TO THE FARMER

It is noticeable that while the country church question in the United States has been under discussion for nearly a quarter of a century, both discussion and effort have revolved largely around such problems as overchurching, underchurching, financial support, the education and supply of pastors, the machinery of ecclesiastical activity and policy. Weightier matters have been all but overlooked. I mean the essential message of the church to the farmers, and the leadership of the church in combating the major iniquities of our time, in developing effective methods of personal character building, in meeting the injustices farmers have had to suffer.

But is there a distinct message to farm folk? Farmers, it will be said, need the same gospel as other

people need. It is not a special, or unique or different gospel that farmers need, but rather such a presentation as appeals to personal and social situations and experiences of farmers, which differ from those, let us say, of the skilled city workers.

Let me illustrate. One of the most influential of our religious journals has been publishing a series of articles on God. The discussion is distinctly a philosophical approach although two of the three discussors are leaders in the field of theology. If we like to think of God as still creating, and of man as a worker together with Him, what a world of meaning comes to the farmer as he sows his seed and reaps his crop. The message about God that comes from the rural pulpit will surely take account of the farmer's unique relationship to the Lord of the harvest.

The social gospel certainly has to be presented to farmers in terms that deal with the society they know. We have some "social creeds" for farmers, some "platforms" for the country church, but there are very few country preachers who can deal with the questions thus set forth. In fact the pronouncements themselves are still in very general terms and need implementing for practical use in the pulpit. Take the idea of the farmers' organization. What are its moral and spiritual implications? The answer is a vital one if the rural pulpit comes to its full power. I have never seen a discussion on this subject on a rural church program.

One of the most needed and most difficult of all the

tasks of the church is to interpret fundamental truths of religion in consonance with the progressive revelations of science. I suspect that the future influence of the Christian church among farm people will depend in no small measure upon its ability to interpret, both to the mind and to the heart of the farmer, the essential truths of the religion of Christ in such fashion that they will illumine, perhaps explain, and certainly ennoble the truths of science. For untold centuries the tiller of the soil was an empiricist, a traditionalist. The experience of the fathers became the wisdom of the children. But all that has changed. The farmers today believe in science—not all of them, but an increasing number of them. Though they do not believe all the scientists tell them! Nor should they. Scientists are not infallible. Many of their conclusions of yesterday are found untenable today. Presumably much of the theory which they proclaim today will be discarded tomorrow. But the search still goes on and will continue so long as man is man and curious to know all he can know about the stupendous thing we call the universe. A residuum of new truth is deposited by every wave of inquiry and thus the structure of man's knowledge is built up through the years. The religious-minded educated farmer does not fear science but welcomes it. He believes that this is God's universe and that he can understand God all the better because of what he can discover of the way God works among the stars and in the soil and in the mind and heart of man.

He is committed to the method of science and to the scientific spirit. He seeks the truth that the truth may make him free—free from superstition and from bondage to mere tradition. He believes in a moral and spiritual as well as in a physical order and he wants to know the laws of both those orders.

Another item in the message of the rural church that should be made prominent is the relation of the church to art. By "art" I mean all that is beautiful. The ministry of music, the richness of service of worship, the beauty of the church and its immediate surroundings, all have their places. No small share of the rewards in the farming enterprise may be found in a lively appreciation of the perpetual art exhibit arranged by nature. "No poem so lovely as a tree!" To adapt Walt Whitman, the farmer can easily wander off by himself, "in the mystical moist night air, and from time to time, look up in perfect silence at the stars." But principally should the preaching interpret the essential poetry of life. Life itself is an art. Let us teach young farmers to be artists in the art of living. "Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues."

Beyond and beneath all that has just been advocated, the rural church needs a *renewed dynamic*: preaching that persuades the farmer, a new evangelism based on sound psychology and a full recognition of personal Christian privilege, the rehabilitation of true worship, the revival of personal prayer life. The newer emphasis upon worship in Protestant churches for example should

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

have thorough study by those who are interested in the town and country church, in order that services without becoming formal may be enriched in churches, many of them plain and bare, with minimum facilities.

One of the most comprehensive tasks of the Christian enterprise among rural people is to mobilize rural Christianity on behalf of the Christian solution of world problems, both rural and non-rural. The American town and country church should develop a large interest in Christian work among the populous villages of other continents. It should maintain at least its present financial interest in foreign missions, but far more important is its intelligent and sympathetic understanding of the workers and the work of the Christian enterprise among the underprivileged and often dispossessed masses of rural folk in the Orient. Perhaps nothing else would so well serve the cause of Christian internationalism among the farmers of the world as the constant and sustained interest of the American country church in what we call foreign missions. This is the inclusive message of the town and country churches.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

When faced with considerations such as those we have been discussing all through this lecture, people are prone to divide into two camps: those who are at once convinced that the case is hopeless, and those who incline to ignore because of sentimental optimism, or who re-

fuse to face because of some predilections, the realities of the situation. Let us hope that a rapidly increasing number are convinced of such truths as these:

1. The maintenance of an adequate rural civilization in the United States is an issue of major importance not merely to the farming people themselves, but to the nation as a whole.

2. This task is one of great complexity. It calls for the best thinking, the utmost self-giving, and the closest co-operation of all persons and of all institutions that have a genuine and intelligent concern in their country's welfare.

3. No measures that seek to solve the farm problem on economic lines alone will succeed in establishing an adequate rural civilization. The opportunity and the impetus for rural folk to pursue a developing life of mind and spirit is the ultimate goal.

4. While it is conceivable that these spiritual ends might be gained without participation of the church and its allies, yet because the church stands so specifically for the deepest values of life, it is at least highly problematical whether these spiritual ends can be gained outside the church.

5. At any rate, the essential religion of Jesus does offer beyond any other evaluation of human life, both the goals and the power for the redemption of individuals and of society as a whole from their bondage to such superstitions, hatreds, injustices, as mar the lives of people.

6. The country church in the United States is losing ground. It has failed to readjust itself to the rapid changes in rural conditions.

7. All these things constitute a challenge to reorganization and a summons to co-operative activities.

In order to meet this challenge I wish to advance a series of propositions, not as a complete program, but as illustrative of practical and I hope practicable steps. With the exception of the first, no attempt will be made to argue the point.

1. Perhaps the sharpest issue in the rural church question lies in the relationships between the farm and non-farm rural people. At the beginning of the present century farmers constituted the large majority of the rural population; today they are little more than half. Then the farmer went to the town occasionally and to trade; today he goes there to the "movies," his children to high school, and now and then he attends the town church. Then the town had an urban psychology and socially had few dealings with farmers; today the town realizes its economic dependence upon the farmers and in the North at least is more friendly to them.

While the old division fences between town and farm have been lowered or obliterated, two new elements have entered upon the rural scene. The first is the industrial village. The industrial rural village is a factor in non-urban areas that needs much more attention than it has been getting. Some 4,000 out of the 18,000 villages of

the United States are essentially industrial and have a population of four million people. Can they be amalgamated into this town and farm relationship? A second element is the injection into rural areas of multitudes of urban workers who prefer to live outside city limits. They form at present a social no-man's land. They are out of the city, but of it. They are in the country but not of it. Moreover, the old farm neighborhoods have passed as essential social groupings. The new elements have not been assimilated. The farmers themselves are free to roam, for church as for business or pleasure.

We face then profound changes, indeed we have already seen them, in the organization and work of all rural social institutions. The pattern of social life takes on new forms and colors before our very eyes. Social agencies must adapt themselves to the changing pattern.

2. I see no escape from the conclusion that for effective church work the small, independent, open-country church is doomed. Nor is the outlook more hopeful for the weak, competitive village church. What shall be substituted? It is a larger church, sometimes a single church, more often a group of co-operating churches, belonging both to village and open country, and organized in some coherent way for a full program of church activity and community service. It will be a town-and-country church, and its area of activity will comprise the larger parish—I prefer to call it “the rural community parish.” The next lec-

ture will stress this theme, but here let me say that I regard the acceptance of the rural community parish as the most important single item in the rural church program in America.

I should like to propose that in each state there be set up as soon as practicable provisional rural community parishes. Let this be carried out on a state-wide basis. It should be done as a result of co-operative studies made by colleges of agriculture, government authorities, especially school authorities, and church leaders.

3. There should be an aggressive endeavor to advance the rural church movement on a truly national scale. Every denomination that has an appreciable number of rural churches should have a strong rural church department properly led and sympathetically and liberally supported. Each department can be encouraged to "keep abreast of what is known as the 'rural problem,' which, as we understand it, constitutes a discovery and an understanding of those forces which make it difficult for rural society to maintain standards of living, economic, social, moral, and spiritual, that make for a Christian civilization."⁷

The problem of home missions in rural communities will remain for a long time to come. There are great stretches of country underchurched. With the advent of the non-farming rural people there are many new-

⁷ Report of Board of Home Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1930.

comers to be attached to the church. Therefore, the Home Missions Council should be backed up by the entire church enterprise in its present efforts and encouraged gradually to give its chief emphasis to extension of the church, both in city and country, into the geographical areas and groups of people that are not yet within the effective influence of the church. The Federal Council of Churches should be heartily supported. It should continue its work of research and interpretation, but should also expand this work and add to it the function of a clearing house between rural and city interests. Every state should have a state council of churches. One of the leaders of the field of church co-operation in America says after nearly twenty years' experience: "I am convinced that the next advance in co-operative Protestantism in America is to be along the lines of state organization. I believe it is through the co-operation of state religious bodies that we are going to be able to effectively deal with the remote parts of the state as well as those near at hand."

4. An entirely new possibility has come up over the horizon through the recent action of the Protestant Episcopal Church, when at its general convention in Denver last autumn it passed a resolution for the establishment of a rural foundation. While no vote was taken as to the amount of money to be raised for this foundation, the committee which made the report to the convention mentioned the sum of five million dol-

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

lars. The purpose of this foundation was stated at the convention as follows:

"We propose that the fund be placed in the hands of the National Council for investment and control, the income to be used under the direction of that body. Such a fund will enable our church to project a worthy program with freedom from the embarrassments now felt in prosecuting many admirable plans for the furtherances of our work in the rural fields. Through it, staff workers could be employed and sustained; adequate salaries guaranteed to the clergy at work in the rural fields; proper equipment for the work given, and in many other ways such support guaranteed as will prevent many of the heartbreaks that now come as worthy work on lame feet or is finally closed for lack of leadership, trained workers, and adequate financial guarantees and support."

5. Every device that is now known or that may be invented that will help in getting the co-operation of existing and necessary churches and the elimination of competing and useless churches should be forwarded by every church body and every church official. Whether this be accomplished by federating churches, consolidating churches, organizing union churches, establishing a community church, or simply by securing the active co-operation of churches, is of far less importance than that the main task of unifying Christian activities on the basis of the greatest possible efficiency in the use of men and money shall be advanced.

6. We need to invent a method of supervision of rural churches that is both highly stimulating and democratic. The local churches need encouragement

and counsel. It is difficult, because church officials charged with this duty are likely to accentuate denominational interests, emphasize machinery and statistics. Supervision should not be so much mandatory as advisory. It is counsel and not authority that is needed, the advice of experts in rural work.

There are many fields of Christian work in rural communities not now covered so far as I know by advisory specialists. True, the Sunday school has its counselors, but the field that we are now calling continuing religious education needs marked leadership as does also the field of Christian character building. The art of life counseling, the technique of Christian community building, the training of laymen for church and community service, all need specialized leadership. Probably the larger denominations can afford to employ men and women of this type, but it is highly desirable that their work and service be correlated among denominations and with some central interdenominational organization.

7. The theological seminaries have made a great advance in the last decade in their offerings to men interested in rural work but only the veriest beginning has been made. Their full service is not performed merely by offerings to prospective rural pastors. City pastors should be trained to understand the significance and the main features of a successful American town and country church. Research and extension should be augmented.

8. Investigation in rural Christian work needs vast

enlargement and more thorough organization. For example: There should be a central body constantly studying ways by which the country church can develop a method of leadership in continuing education for rural people in such forms as will insure the primacy of a genuinely Christian interpretation of the personal problems of life, of the attitudes of rural people toward their natural environment, of issues involved in establishing an efficient rural community, and of rural participation in meeting national and international problems. "There is a fine field for a real Christian science in the investigation and obviation of those ignorances, prejudices, and illusions, those prepossessions of class, race, sect, locality and nation, that keep the Golden Rule from being even faintly operative in the wider relations of life." ⁸

There should be scientific, sympathetic, continuous study of all the rural problems of America from the Christian point of view. To this end there must be set up some recognized tests of what a rural Christian civilization would be, and then every condition, economic, social, political, must be carefully weighed in terms of its probable results upon such a civilization. Other "projects" for study might be: The ratio of salary of the preacher to local income standards and to salaries of publicly supported servants and officials; the fiscal capacity of rural communities; the development of

⁸ Cooley, Charles Horton, *Life and the Student* (Alfred A. Knopf).

a standard budget needed to support a standard rural church; the need and method of supplementary aid; the question whether a minimum salary for the pastor of a community parish should not be paid out of some common fund; whether supplementary aid may be divided between farm and village, between community parish and the area center.

I doubt if either the leaders or the rank and file of the rural people are aware of the service that has been rendered during the past decade by the Institute of Social and Religious Research in New York City. Both in establishing proper methods and in studying significant questions the Institute has made a contribution of first importance. But the work of research has only begun, and the questions just raised, while important as relating to church methods, are all of less significance than an understanding and interpretation of great economic and social trends among rural people, judged in the light of their influence upon the Christian way of life and the possible impact of Christian principles upon these trends.

9. A suggestion worth considering is the inauguration of Rural Round Tables, designed to band together frequently but with a minimum of organization those who wish to have a part in any phase of rural progress, with the hope and belief that true conference may clear the way to practical integration of conviction and endeavor.

10. We have in America no journal that reaches

large numbers of farmers which can be said to present consistently the larger aspects of the rural problem, and certainly none that present the kind of message that the church ought to give. It would be a contribution of major significance if a way could be devised by which authoritative, inspiring, and practical messages concerning the work of the Christian enterprise among rural people could be syndicated to all parts of the country in a fashion to meet the eyes of leading farmers as well as country preachers.

11. In general the American town and country church needs bigger parishes, bigger preachers, bigger salaries. This is not because bigness counts, but simply because of the absolute futility of expecting the church to take command of the task of building a better rural civilization, under the prevailing régime of small weak churches, narrow programs, uneducated clergy, beggarly salaries.

12. I want the church to be the farmer's chief protagonist. I want him to look upon it as his most ardent champion in his struggle for social justice. I want it to be his spiritual home, where he meets his God, and where he finds peace. But also I want the church to be the farmer's chief antagonist. For I want it to convict him of his sins, to bring him to repentance, to challenge every unlovely thing in his personal life, his home atmosphere, his community relationships.

TO SUM UP

Here in America, during the past twenty years, both the philosophy and the technique of a strong rural church have been evolved and are now available. To validate the philosophy and to implement the technique there is now need of: (1) The restatement of a glowing Christian message of eternal values for the individual farmer and of social justice and obligation for the farm group. (2) Continuous, correlated investigation of all significant facts and potent factors that enter into the problem of projecting the Christian enterprise among rural people. (3) Intimate, planned co-operation of denominational bodies through national, state, area, and local church federations, councils, and unions. (4) A widespread, inclusive, and aggressive organization of Christian farmers that will grapple with the question of making religion a major force in rural life, with the same vision and earnestness that have commanded any other rural reform. (5) A persistent campaign of education of farmers both within and without the church as to the fundamentals of Christian character and the basic principles of a Christian rural social order. (6) The projection of the principles and in general the method of Christian rural work into the Orient, on the basis of co-operative participation in the common problem of leading the people on the land into a more adequate rural civilization. (7) The enlistment, the proper education, and the strong support of a rural ministry

AMERICAN TOWN AND COUNTRY CHURCH

that in both West and East shall win for rural folk a more abundant life of body, mind, and soul.

What sort of church can fulfil such a commission as we have assigned to it and so command the rural advance?

It must be a church united for action, so co-operative in its separate parts that they move on with a measure of statesmanship and consistent policy to common ends.

It must be a studying church, that is constantly digging for facts, discovering trends, appraising needs, adjusting itself readily to new methods and to emergencies.

It must be a character-building church, not content with merely drawing people within itself, but satisfied only when it has inspired and taught both those within its fold and those outside the essential elements of worthy living.

It must be a community-serving church, living not unto itself, but ministering to all within its reach.

It must be a worshiping church, that brings to all who enter its portals that peace that passeth all understanding.

It must be a church "keen for the Kingdom," holding an abiding conviction that an adequate rural civilization is one in which the very heart of the message of Jesus is demonstrated in daily work and life.

It must be a church with a passion for the dispossessed and it must care more for the great masses than

for any others. It must be a church proud to be recognized because it preaches to the poor the gospel of a truly abundant life on earth; because it heals those who are broken-hearted by reason of sorrow or apparent defeat; because it preaches deliverance to those who have been captive to their own sins or the "sins of society"; because it gives recovery of sight to those who have been blind to the everlasting love of God their Father, to their own unworthy thoughts, and to their own un-Christian deeds to their fellow-men; because it sets at liberty them that are bruised by the buffets of untoward circumstances; because it proclaims the present year, whether a time of prosperity or of depression, the acceptable year of the Lord and his work for the great multitudes of the children of men.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

THERE are students of rural affairs who minimize the significance of the local rural community on the ground that with modern communications it will be impossible to set boundaries to the local interests and activities of farmers. But in the main, rural sociologists hold the opinion represented in the following statement by Dr. Sanderson:¹

“This inherent social strength of the rural community, the fact that the community is relatively permanent, and the appreciation that only through community effort may rural people realize their natural desire to enjoy some of the advantages of cities, force the conviction that the community must be the primary unit for the organization of rural progress.”

One of our agricultural journals recently published

¹ Sanderson, Dwight, *The Farmer and His Community* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co.).

a plan "to lay out a district in a typical rural community with a small non-railroad village as a center, and to bring to bear on this group all the creative and constructive social and educational influences, aiming to evolve a richer and more abundant individual and community life."

Boundaries of the rural community cannot be fixed arbitrarily or finally. There already exist trading communities and school communities and health service communities. Dr. Sanderson says that probably the local community will build around appropriate rural institutions such as the school and the church. Farmers' organizations like the Grange and some types of co-operatives have always relied heavily upon their "locals." We are advancing into a period of scientific study, and I hope of reform, with reference to local government. One of our great tasks in rural America is to refashion strong local units of political society. The Roosevelt Country Life Commission stressed the community idea with special reference to the open country; we are now obliged to include the village and the town, and are thinking in terms of town-and-country communities.

In previous lectures we have endeavored to describe the rural problem, to indicate the more significant relationships of religion to movements for rural reconstruction, and to suggest some steps by which the American town and country church may gain leadership in rural affairs. If the emphasis we have just given to the local rural community is sound sociology, as I think it is,

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

we will need to explore its meaning for the rural church. Doubtless the local church has received due deference in American Protestantism, but it has been supported largely for its own sake, not with reference to its place in strengthening the community idea. We have numerous churches within a community but few community churches.

Movements for country church improvement have been going on for thirty years and have recognized all along the necessity of eliminating superfluous churches. The state of Maine many years ago attempted an interdenominational approach to this problem. Massachusetts, through its State Federation of Churches, was one of the earliest to accomplish federation of rural churches. The community idea was implied rather than argued, because the New England "town" is the nearest approach we have had to a true local community.

A *Bulletin* of the Federal Council of Churches two or three years ago contained this pregnant paragraph:

"In the last analysis, the co-operative Christian movement in America succeeds or fails at its point of contact with the local community. If actual churches, made up of real folks with the common human weaknesses (which, alas, church membership does not wholly eliminate!), cannot get together in actual co-operative life and service, then they who work on national programs and who elaborate larger philosophies labor in vain."

This statement takes us to the kernel of the question of a successful and commanding town and country

church—the local community. No success here, none anywhere. No unity here, none anywhere. No leadership here, none anywhere. All the councils, boards, secretaries, conferences, resolutions indeed labor in vain unless the local community is led by a church that is strong, efficient, aggressive, helpful. I am convinced that the rural community parish is the central feature, the indispensable accompaniment of the effort to make the church a dominant factor in rural life.

There is no authoritative definition of a rural community parish but it may be said to be a local geographical area, often comprising open country only, but usually including a village or town, in which the Christian enterprise is organized and acts substantially as a unit.

At the present time there are two important movements in which the community idea is applied to the country church—the Community Church Movement and the Larger Parish Plan. There is no occasion here to dwell upon the details of either of these; literature about them is abundant. But it is worth while to indicate the principles they profess.

With respect to the community church some quotations from an authoritative publication outline these principles and announce a sound philosophy of country church development.

“The community church movement is at present dominantly rural. Of the 1,296 churches, 1,066 are in villages of 2,500 population or less, or in the open country. Of

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

the remainder, 114 are in towns of 2,500 to 25,000 and 116 are in cities of more than 25,000. More than eighty-two per cent of community churches are rural."

"The two fundamental features, then, of all community churches are that they substitute the community for the sect as their primary basis of organization, and purpose for dogma as their principle of cohesion."

"The community church does not exist to serve its community; it exists to express the community life; to give the community the means of serving itself."

"If once the church and its leadership thoroughly identify themselves with the community so that this becomes a major presupposition of all thinking and planning, the specific problems concerning community relationships will largely solve themselves."

"In fact, its community relationships are in a broad sense a part of its program of adult re-education in the moral and religious implications of living together."

"The future of religious education in rural America lies with the community organization of religion."

"The new principle is that of organizing communities for the expression, cultivation, and propagation of religious ideals and the spiritual life. Ideally, and in some few places actually, every individual in the community is included." ²

The community church idea owes much to Canada. The farmers of the western provinces made up their minds some years ago that they could not afford to maintain competing local churches and proceeded to unite them. This was the beginning of and perhaps the largest contributing factor to the establishment of the United Church of Canada.

² Piper, David R., *Community Churches* (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co.).

The Larger Parish Plan as we now know it probably had its origin in Michigan, where Rev. Harlow S. Mills twenty years ago organized the Benzonia Community Larger Parish. At that time Mr. Mills laid down the basic principles of the idea and these still persist as representing the general philosophy of the movement. Briefly put, they are as follows: The real object of the church is to serve the people and to give value received. It must serve all the people. It must serve all the interests of the people. The village church must be responsible for country evangelization; to do this it must be a community church.

The present development of the larger parish plan may be credited largely to Dr. Malcolm Dana, who for the past decade or more has been at the head of the rural department of the Congregational Council. The following abbreviated descriptions of the larger parish plan are taken from *The Larger Parish Plan*, by Dr. Dana:

"Town and country realize their interdependence and co-operate in securing for each other equal social, economic, and religious privileges.

"Communities, neighborhoods, and churches pool their resources so that together they can obtain a ministry, program, and equipment which no one of them might get alone.

"People of different races and creeds associate together in a religious fellowship where churches include all and exclude none, and subordinate doctrinal tests to those of Christian discipleship.

"Ministers and peoples formulate and administer plans and programs by means of a Larger Parish Council com-

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

posed of delegates representing every co-operating neighborhood and church.

"A multiple ministry of trained specialists with a departmental work seek to discover, mobilize, train, and use local leadership.

"Service is rendered over areas as well as churches reaching out with a maximum effort to minister to every person living in the open country.

"Selfish interests are forgotten and churches co-operate in putting first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness over the entire countryside."

It is not entirely clear what differences in practice would ensue if all the principles of each movement should become operative, say in adjoining parishes. The apparent indispensables in both are a local area of religious work that conforms to a potentially community-conscious group of people, and integration of religious activities within the area for all the people and ideally by all the people.

The rural community parish does not necessarily call for but one church within its borders. The number and composition of the population, topography, all that is involved in the practical situation, are factors in determining the number of churches. Some sectarian differences cannot at present be composed, others for good reasons need not be discarded. There are deep-seated loyalties to be deferred to. In some regions endowed churches are an issue.

There seem to be two principles to be invoked in determining the number of churches that can be maintained in a given community, one economic and the

other spiritual. No community should attempt to support a larger religious establishment than is justified by the real needs of the people, while the tradition that the needs of the people demand numerous sectarian divisions should be reduced to lowest terms. On the spiritual side, anything that savors of denominational rivalry, anything that stands in the way of church efficiency in terms of community service, anything that prevents complete co-operation of the Christian forces, should be eliminated, because if remediable it is essentially un-Christian.

The opinion was expressed in the previous lecture that the small, independent, open-country church must pass. But the rural community parish does not demand that all churches in the open country must be given up. If there is a complete breakdown of the barriers and antagonisms that have often separated the people of the village or the small town from the farmers, it is possible that the farmers would join heartily in maintaining a church, or, if necessary, two or three churches in the village or town center of the rural community. On the other hand, the more widely the service of the church can be carried directly to the people near their homes, and in their neighborhoods, even under modern conditions of transportation, the more effective the work is likely to be. Hence, frequently the small open-country church will be maintained as part of a deliberate plan, for it may be needed to meet neighborhood requirements. But if so these open-country churches

should not be merely opportunity stations. They should be the nuclei of neighborhood religious life—centers of worship and of religious education. They must justify their existence. The co-operation of churches is more important than union, except as failure to unite may preserve churches useless to the community. One value of the community church lies in the fact that it allows its members to retain their historic religious convictions, but to unite for fellowship and service in a strong self-sustaining community institution.

There can be no effective town and country church if the farmers themselves do not feel at home or if they have only a minor part to play. They do not want a church which in the best sense they cannot help manage. This is fundamental. No effort to bring the farmers into village or town for church purposes will ever succeed in reaching more than a fraction of the farmers or in guiding the rural community, if it allows the village to dominate. We must prepare ourselves, however, for accepting the prophecy that, broadly speaking, the effort of small, independent, numerous, open-country churches to maintain themselves in any commanding position is doomed. We are rather to seek a town and country church based on the fact that the town and the farm interests are mutual.

The numerical size of a local church is of considerable importance. A compact, good-spirited, working membership of one hundred or less will make a worth-

while church. But lower maintenance costs, higher quality of pastor, greater availability of lay leadership, wider variety of service, are probable accompaniments of a somewhat larger church. The rural community parish will usually provide a church of requisite size. On this question of size a competent investigator has this to say:

"The author believes that the average minister will be able to do his best work and achieve the largest results with a single rural organization of from three hundred to five hundred members. Under normal conditions such a membership would be able to furnish ample ministerial support and enough leaders who could be used effectively to do the work of the church."³

The development of the community spirit, the maintenance of the community idea, the elimination of petty cliques, are other indispensable requisites of the town and country church. An advocate of the educational emphasis in church work says:

"Every Christian church should seek earnestly to break down the barriers separating social groups and to build in their stead a community." "This development of the community consciousness is essentially the task of adult education. Men must be led to reach across the barriers which separate them and seek, first of all, to understand each other."⁴

We must not ignore the significance of the rural

³ Ormond, Jesse Marvin, *The Country Church in North Carolina* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press).

⁴ Winchester, Benjamin S., *The Church and Adult Education* (New York: Harper & Bros.).

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

community parish as a practical aspect of sound social organization. It is not only a wise device for strengthening the church; it is an important contribution to that method of stabilizing rural society that gives more promise than any other. We seek to erect closely-knit rural communities in which all individuals and all groups feel at home and become psychologically one large family. We want community loyalty, community patriotism, community co-operation.

Nearly all students of present-day country church work would agree with this strong presentation of the importance of unifying religious work in the local community.

"If the town and country church is to continue to occupy, or to recover its place in the religious life of the nation; if the rural church is to maintain that spiritual potency that will enable it to lift mankind in the future as in the past; if it is to continue as the source of the stream of life, to replenish and purify our growing cities; then it will require that our church administrators shall proceed on some such strategy as is here outlined to meet the situation. Independent action must clear the way for kingdom advancement; religious social control must be substituted for institutional self-interests."⁵

As a practical step it would be advantageous if an entire state could be mapped into provisional local communities. If the country church forces would take the

⁵ *Composite Administrative Report of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1931.*

lead, it is quite to be expected that the educational and other public agencies would co-operate, for they would sympathize cordially with a vigorous effort to seek a correlated, unified Christian enterprise in the local rural community.

THE CHURCH AT WORK

I shall not attempt to provide a detailed program for the town and country church at work, but wish merely to call attention to some outstanding problems that usually get too little attention in the local church.

So many "surveys" have been made that both farmers and officials are inclined to call a halt. But it cannot be said too strongly that if the town and country church is to succeed it must know its community. Hence inventories, surveys of situations, made intelligently and carefully, and kept "up-to-date," are indispensable. The technique of such studies is well understood. In the last analysis what we want is a community self-study, with such expert aid as needs to be called in.

Emphasis must again be laid upon the work of laymen. There is plenty of "church work" done by church members. It is a poor sort of church that does not have a half-dozen organizations connected with it in which adult men and women as well as young people are active. Church sociables, missionary societies, "ladies' aid," Christian Endeavor—there is ample machinery. Unfortunately no small proportion of these activities are merely activities. That is to say, while

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

they may be necessary, even desirable, there is constant danger that they will become mechanized, and still greater danger that they will absorb time, energy, devotion that should go into a wider range of vital service for the people of the community. For there are two outlets for the activities of laymen that ought not to be dissociated, service for the church itself as an organization and deliberately planned effort to apply religion to community activities.

It is not to be expected that all members of any church will be of equal devotion or intelligence or skill in community work. One wonders if there cannot be devised some method by which the most effective members of the church may be banded together in some special fellowship for study and for service.

There are some who do not hesitate to consider the value of a pastorless church. One of the wisest and most thoughtful of our leaders in the Church Federation Movement says in a personal letter:

"It is assumed that, if a church cannot hold a preaching service, it can do nothing. But a church with only ten or twelve members could do far more by meeting simply to pray and list individuals to study cases and do personal work. Such scattered bands, using the radio for sermons, and preparing for occasional visits of the staff of a 'larger parish,' might redeem the countryside. In the Southern States especially this suggestion might prove fruitful."

A development with large possibilities that has received comparatively little study, consists in the or-

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

ganization of young people's churches, not as independent organizations but as a part of the church itself. Young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four can be set to work studying various aspects of the church enterprise, and managing certain types of service both within the church and for the community. There ought to come out of it an entirely new interest and capacity for permanent leadership. We need a vigorous and stimulating rural "youth movement," and the church might well lead. For the sake of both church and community, the enlistment of young people in activities which they can largely manage has great promise. A serious difficulty at present is the demand upon young people that comes from the schools and allied activities.

It will be recalled that one of the principles enunciated both by the Community Church and the Larger Parish Movements is that the work of the church should be for all the people of the community and by all of them. This is a hard saying in practice. The country church, like many city churches, is often merely a private religious club; it should be a like-minded group of people endeavoring to be of help to everybody within reach. To make the town and country church a genuine success it must seek to interest and influence everyone in the community, not chiefly to secure support for the church financially, but in terms of a co-operating fellowship seeking to apply the gospel of good will to the interests of all.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

The perennial problem of the church as a social center emerges at this point. The question has never been settled even theoretically. The sociable alliances of rural people are more divided than they have ever been before. Doubtless the country church cannot set itself up as the chief social agency of the community, but it can as a natural part of its activities so instigate and inspire activities that it becomes the natural setting for a large share of the socialized community life. To accomplish such an end with any measure of success the church needs as a part of its equipment a community hall or house.

We have already considered the possibility of organizing urban-rural areas in which each local community in the area becomes part of a general plan of co-operation in spirit and action. The importance of doing this is put so well by one of our leading American rural sociologists that I quote him again:⁶

"The day of rural isolation is past. Any effort to segregate rural from urban life is a vain attempt to stem the tide of progress. There are values in urban civilization which when rightly used will make rural life much more congenial, as there are values in country life which are essential to the happiness, health, and sanity of our increasing city population. Increased contacts with cities means a larger life for rural people. Nevertheless, owing to the relation of successful agriculture to the land, there will be a greater permanency of rural locality groups, and rural

⁶ Sanderson, Dwight, *The Relation of the Farmer to Rural and Urban Groups* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

people will find a satisfaction in the personal groups of their own local communities which will not be filled by the broader but less personal associations in the urban centers. The progress of rural civilization depends upon the extent to which its people obtain the advantages of urban associations and yet remain loyal to the fundamental values of farm life and to promoting the socialization of their local communities."

The greatest difficulty in the way of realizing any such ideal as this lies in the city itself. There is reason to believe that the attitude of the resident of the village or town toward the farmer is rapidly changing. There is not much evidence that the attitude of the city people toward country people has changed very much. A change in this attitude, for the sake not alone of the town and country church, but of the church as a whole, is more likely to be accomplished by the urban-rural church area than in any other way. A whole cluster of rural community parishes located in the trading area of the city may thus have the friendly co-operation of the city churches. In areas such as these perhaps the church can help to enlist rural-serving physicians, lawyers, business men, social service workers. If we are to get ahead in social self-direction, the attitudes of professional men as well as of organizations and institutions must be radically changed with reference to the relationship between city and rural groupings. So far as organization can aid this concept of urban-rural areas, the central city will regard itself as merely the normal center of a natural social region in which it has

both privileges and obligations. Thus prejudices can be broken down and genuine good will established.

The financial aspect of these rural community parishes calls for far more attention than can be given here. It is probable that a majority of rural community parishes, properly organized and led, could support themselves, especially if they are on a town and country basis. However, we must find a way to guarantee what might be called a standard rural church, and if this standard rural church cannot be maintained because of the relative financial weakness of the community, help must come from outside. In this event we should invoke the principle of organic interest, and regard the local church as a cell in a larger structure—the Christian church—which, for the sake of the larger organism itself, cannot be allowed to decay or lapse. There may have to be outside help for home missions work in rural places, that is efforts to reach unchurched areas or groups. There might well be an enlargement of the services of specialists in town and country church work, who can assist both pastors and laymen in maintaining the best methods, a source, too, of inspiration coming from outside the parish.

You will recall that one of the principles enunciated by Mr. Mills in his Larger Parish Plan was to make the church give value received. The following comment by Dean Ormond⁷ emphasizes this point: "If the

⁷ Ormond, Jesse Marvin, *op. cit.*

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

church were duly magnified by its rural constituency, it would be more adequately supported." The church must convince the people of the rural community that it is indispensable to them.

We can make but scant reference in these lectures to the vital subject of education in religion. It is a theme in itself for a course of lectures, and what is of more consequence, for the close study and earnest endeavor of the local church. There is an old phrase now somewhat out of fashion that expresses the character of the problem—"Christian nurture." Perhaps failure to give this matter more attention in this discourse may be partly atoned for by asserting that there is no other aspect of the function of the local church more nearly vital than this.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Because another phase of religious education is newer and almost equally important I do wish to call your attention to some local applications of the subject of continuing religious education. You will recall that this phase of continuing education is based on the belief that the Christian enterprise has a function in continuing education for the entire community. This function lies in so dominating the mind of the community that ideally everyone in the community is always seeking rightness and justice in every move. This is not a question of church authority or a matter of personal criticism or a hunt for scandal, but a steady pervasive

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

influence that keeps people keyed to the central issues of life.

Continuing religious education is not propaganda, nor doctrine, but frank, open study and discussion of how to realize the principles of Jesus in actual life and in all its relations. It deals with economic, political, social, moral issues as they appear in individual lives, in the community, in the state, in the nation, in the world. This work needs correlating with the Sunday school because it should be pressed particularly in those years between fifteen and twenty-five, that are the most plastic and formative. It ties up with life-counseling, and thus has to do with public schools and voluntary organizations, like boys' and girls' clubs and Boy Scouts. It should co-operate with farmers' organizations and the co-operative extension service.

What are some of the subjects that might well be included in a plan of continuing education led by the town and country church? There is education in preparation for family life. This objective tends to sum up in a natural way and give point to the very difficult and delicate, but all-important, questions that are involved in social hygiene, sex education, and many other aspects of the moral life of the people. The church may not necessarily be charged with the full responsibility for this task, but it can hardly dodge its obligation. The church can assist materially in the education of parents with respect to family religion and the religious training of the children. The co-operative

society in its principles and in its successful practice is to such a surprising degree an effective demonstration of Christlikeness, that it may well be studied in the church.

There are aspects of cultural education which the country and the country church can foster. There is a wide range of culture among farmers. We still find the "hick," the bore, crudeness, vulgarity. We also find refinement, genuine culture. There are thousands of country gentlemen and gentlewomen who do their day's work with both hands and brain. It has been said that perhaps the most appreciative group of radio music listeners are the farmers of Iowa. The church should foster sound culture. Culture is appreciation of the good and the true and the beautiful. Culture may grow out of daily work, out of the immediate environment. Literature, art, nature, music can be made to yield spiritual fruitage.

A friend of mine now in his "eighties," and for his entire life connected with rural matters, said in a letter to me last winter apropos of the present situation: "I am satisfied that in order to exert the greatest beneficial influence upon rural life, we need to emphasize the commercial side of it with less emphasis, and to enlarge upon values that cannot be expressed by the dollar mark. It is only in this way that we can carry comfort and hope and satisfaction to the people who must carry on in rural communities, and make their influence felt in a way that will ennoble, beautify, and enlarge the

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

most valued opportunities attached to the land." It was particularly interesting to have him go on to say: "In spite of all the discouragements that have recently come to the farmer in connection with farm life, if I were to start again today, with my information and my ideals, I should attach myself to farm life as an occupation."

Some principles of method in continuing education are suggested by the following quotations:

"If the Bible and history and science could be presented in the natural way, in the form of concrete situations similar to our own, we should then see our present problems illumined by past experience and our faltering feet more easily would find their way." "But the complete utilization of fellowship in the work of teaching is found in the project method." "This method of teaching, and learning, is as elastic and interesting as life itself. It is life, indeed; a life situation or problem out of which it is proposed to derive educational values. It is a device for making social effort count for the realization of social ends."⁸

Special emphasis should be placed upon the discussion method of continuing education. People learn from reading, from observation, conversation, debate, but organized discussion is still too little utilized. It is not difficult to arouse discussion, but it is an art to get the best out of it. For good results there should be provided authoritative data gained from those who have made a scientific study of the subject. These data

⁸ Winchester, B. S., *The Church and Adult Education* (New York: Harper & Bros.).

should be supplemented by the actual experience of the people themselves. There must be leadership in discussion and this leadership must be more or less prepared, not merely voicing prejudices or depending upon the spur of the moment. Discussion easily becomes diffuse, ventilates prejudices, is sidetracked into minor issues. The results of the discussion should be conserved so that "something is done about it" or at least so that the conclusions of the group become clarified if not formulated.

In many ways the church is one of the very best forums of discussion for the town and country community, because it is in the church that the great ends of society can best be enunciated. It is profitable to discuss, let us say, the technique of economic improvement; it is far more important to consider the real human ends and purposes of economic improvement. It is not to be supposed that the church will take over the problems of farm improvement or of economic co-operation, or political differences, but it will seek to get the community to study carefully and continuously the larger and more vital human aspects of all these questions.

I have long waited for some denomination to take the lead in encouraging its country preachers to provide a means by which their sermons could be discussed by the congregation. A vast deal of preaching is nearly useless, not so much because it is not good preaching as because there is no opportunity for the people them-

selves to meet the preacher on the common ground of trying to understand all the implications of the sermon and thus to assimilate them to their own thinking.

Many of the best opportunities of the church in continuing education lie less in formal analytical study than in vital suggestion, in seed sowing, in the planting of formative ideas, in directing attitudes, changing points of view. Thus men and women, inside and outside the church, sometimes consciously, probably more often unconsciously, will learn to make Christian ideas the basis for their decisions.

For effective continuing education under the auspices of a town and country church, a library is all but indispensable. Hence it is highly desirable that the church maintain a library of books and periodicals covering the problems of personal and community life, and broad human interests as well. It should be a working, effective library, not merely a collection. It would supplement a public library if there be one in the community, especially in the fields of interest very likely not stressed in the small public library, and in case there is no public library the church library might well serve as such.

Is it not clear that we sorely need a "church school" in the countryside that really educates in the field of applied Christianity?

THE MESSAGE TO THE RURAL COMMUNITY

The central feature of the message of the local

church is the perennial need of renewing the thirsting human spirit with the waters of life. If the rural church does not have or cannot successfully proclaim a message that clearly reflects for the present age the mind and heart and sacrifice of Jesus, it would better surrender any merely humanitarian service to other social agencies. But the message that persuades or compels men to deep-seated allegiance is not a simple matter. There are significant implications for the rural church that are sometimes overlooked. May some of these be recited here, merely as suggestive of the importance of making the Christian message practically effective among rural people?

The church must meet and deal with the controlling ideas of farmers and try to change them, if they need to be changed, to truly Christian ideas. Farmers more sharply perhaps than urban dwellers are divided into adherents and non-adherents of the church. In the great westward migrations of the nineteenth century the farmers took their churches with them. The church was a rallying point, a neighborhood center. The little church and the little school were marked characteristics of at least mid-western settlement. This brought great loyalty to the church and an acceptance of its teachings. But a large proportion of the farmers never were in the church, and this status was accepted on both sides as one of those arrangements that is natural and apt to be permanent.

Perhaps for this reason religion came to be rather too

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

exclusively associated with the church both for those within its folds and for those without. Traditional theology persists longer in the country than in the city. The individualism of the countryman has displayed itself not seldom in ways of unpleasantness in the country church. Farmers are, however, continuously more susceptible to ideas that prevail in urban centers, and it is increasingly difficult to classify their controlling ideas by rural standards.

I belong by temperament and training and essential interest to those who believe in the social gospel, but I unhesitatingly assert that the personal aspect of religion requires the best the church has to give. It is the individual soul, the individual personality, the individual character, the individual destiny that is, after all, the main concern. The social gospel gets its validity because it is impossible for the individual to develop apart from society. In our quest for a Christian social order we must not be led away from the contribution of the church to individual religious needs. Rural folk must gain individual spiritual power that will possess their lives.

There are two other abiding personal needs that the church must meet more fully than it does at present. The first one is the matter of moral standards. We are drifting rapidly from the sanctions of moral authority of the church, which in turn has found them in the Bible. In actual practice things that we used to believe were sufficient rules of conduct, decreasingly determine

conduct. This is more true in the cities than in the country. It is more true in certain parts of our country than in others. The drift is unmistakable. The church to be in command must recover its influence as a repository of moral sanctions. There is little hope that it can make this recovery on the basis of authority. It must make it on the basis of some deep, abiding recognitions of the moral law. It must take the teachings of the Master not as rules but as principles, not as a body of doctrine, but as a spirit of life.

There has been some speculation concerning the moral effect on the farmers themselves of the change from a self-sufficing to a commercial agriculture. Does the entrance of the profit motive deteriorate character even though the actual monetary return is not great? The speculative spirit is not unknown among farmers. The increased value of some of the best lands in America was due not primarily to the labor put on them, but to the general national development. Speculation in land is almost sure to be rife under a régime of private property simply because land is limited in quantity. Worthless stocks sell among farmers as among other people. These are elements within the pale of consideration by the church as it seeks to purify motive.

Another loss in the church everywhere is the decline of worship. It is not sufficient merely to deplore the absence of the family altar or to criticize people because they "go visiting" instead of attending church. The

ministry of the church as an agency of worship must go deeper than that. I have no prescription. The remedy may lie in a richer service. It may lie in gaining such a hold upon young people and in providing them with such material that daily devotions become a fixed habit, not perfunctory but vital. In connection with the need of public worship we may heed the words of Professor Cooley: "Sentiments of higher good or right, like other sentiments, find source and renewal in intercourse." True worship will not conclude, however, with fellowship gatherings on Sunday, but will abide through the days of labor. The subject of prayer is one of so much significance and so delicate withal that one wishes it could be studied sympathetically by those who are competent to understand its full meaning and are acquainted with the mind of the farmer. "A religion without this intimate communion with the Eternal is an external tradition rather than a vital experience; a religion which has no outlet into thought and work is as when a sacred Jordan ends in a Dead Sea, on whose surface one may float but whose water one cannot drink."⁹

The rural environment has in it many advantages for personal character building that may be exploited both in preaching and in teaching by the rural church. The rural man may drink from the springs that break from the hills. He may become sensitive to virginal

⁹ Peabody, Francis G., *The Apostle Paul and Modern World*, p. 182 (New York: The Macmillian Company). Used by permission.

nature in all her moods. He may respond to the quietude of the fields. He may gain strength from the maturing of crops and fruits and flowers. He may realize that his character is influenced by his fellowship with domesticated animals.

The law of indirection in human life is persistently neglected in religious education as well as in public education. Character itself is a by-product of impulses, activities, group relationships, strife between instincts and ideals. We cannot by merely wishing add to moral and spiritual height any more easily than to physical stature. We grow when we obey the laws of growth. In religious education we rely still almost wholly upon traditional types of comment on certain parts of the Bible, and too little upon the fundamental psychological fact that personal influence is far greater than writings no matter how sacred.

One of the most effective avenues of approach for the country minister is to teach his people the character value and the culture value of farm work. It is high time that we discard the age-long error that work is something to be escaped. Constructively it counts for far more than leisure in the lives of the farmers in establishing personal qualities and in its responsibility for their outlook on life and relations to their fellow-men.

The rural church will press home upon the farmer his duties as well as his rights; his duties to the soil, to the consumer, to his fellow-farmers, to his brethren of the city, to humanity.

As in personal life, so in community life the church has a message both for prosperity and depression—the message that men should learn to live grandly whether they are on the economic upgrade or the downgrade. No matter what the price of wheat or cotton, no matter what the financial shortage on the farm, men and women will still live out their lives. The crucial question is whether these lives shall be dwarfed and narrowed and stunted by untoward economic conditions or ruined by the very desire for more things.

THE MESSENGER

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” The countryman needs the presence and the benediction of such a messenger as that. In days of depression, that he may be convinced that still “God’s in his Heaven and all’s well with the world.” In periods of prosperity, that he may be recalled to the deep values of human living. Thus we come to deal with some of the functions of the minister as we would like to see them exercised in the town and country church.

We may think of the rural pastor first of all as an interpreter. An interpreter of the Bible? Yes. Of the teachings of the church? Yes. But far more an interpreter of life in terms of the religion of Jesus. The country preacher has an especially hard task in

interpreting the profoundest thinking into terms not only understood verbally but really grasped intellectually and appreciated emotionally by the farmers. It is not so difficult for the preacher, for example, to proclaim the God of the promising seed-time and of the abundant harvest, but what of the God of the killing frost and the burning drought? Yet he must find a way. In this realm the minister needs to be both microscope and telescope. He must see into the depths of the human heart, and he must have clear vision of the wide world as it is and as it ought to be. He speaks to the farmer who plows his small plot of earth by day, but who when night comes should find himself scanning the stars.

This is not a lecture of advice to preachers, but one can scarcely avoid urging both preachers and hearers that effective preaching as a rule deals with real situations, with personal difficulties, community conditions, national and international issues. We live today and we must meet today's situations. One wonders whether the theological seminaries give sufficient attention to the rural environment. For it is mostly in this environment that the farmer lives his life. There can easily be too much book preaching.

The country preacher is a proclaimer of the Christian message, but he is also a teacher, like Jesus himself. The preacher requires the teaching instinct, teaching preparation, and the use of teaching methods. The minister is a healer of souls. He is a community leader and builder. He must be the means of redeeming people

from narrowness to fulness of life, from paganism to the Christian spirit. In all this work his task is concrete and practical. He must not beat the air. He must meet needs.

One persistent handicap of agriculture is that it does not furnish the attractive heroes for many young men of parts. This was not so in the pioneer days. The man of the covered wagon was a hero to youth largely because he was heroic. Today the barons of industry, the kings of commerce, the potentates of politics, possibly the princes of the pulpit, all in the city, are the heroes. This lack must be met in some fashion, and the preacher has to meet it, not by sentimental gushing about rural life, but by proving, as I think he can prove, that intelligent farming does call for "all that a man has," that the rural environment may be made to yield to the intelligent man full growth of mind and of spirit, that it has its battles and its heroisms. The minister must be a David Grayson, making vivid and attractive the adventure of living on the land.

"The church also must learn to diagnose, and to minister to, cases of spiritual bankruptcy, providing continuous stimulus, counsel, and encouragement until spiritual vitality is restored to normal and healthy functioning."¹⁰ It is not alone in bankruptcy but in the daily business of a normal life that there will be call for

¹⁰ Winchester, B. S., *The Church and Adult Education* (New York: Harper & Bros.).

help. In the last analysis all problems are moral. Community as well as personal difficulties will persist.

In multitudes of churches and perhaps whole communities, the pastor, widely but unostentatiously and effectively, is a minister of comfort and a counselor of wisdom, yet it is doubtful if the church or the minister, generally speaking, has the confidence of the people, especially of youth, that he ought to have. The schools and other agencies can and will to a large extent furnish guidance with regard to vocational opportunities and fitness and educational desires. It is hardly conceivable that they can meet all the needs of the human spirit. The farmer is ready to consult a physician, a veterinary surgeon, a county agent, a poultry specialist, and sometimes a lawyer. He should be quite as ready as youth and as man to consult the pastor.

The pastor as life-counselor will approach personal difficulties from the standpoint of the individual's true destiny. Every individual has some ambition. It may betray itself in some little immediate problem or in the long, long thoughts of youth. How can it best be achieved? What is the essential technique for success? Shall the preacher not answer, Education of the right sort? What is the measure of personal achievement? Shall he not insist, Character? What is the surest source of power? Shall he not answer, Religion? The life-counselor can teach that the true superiority complex consists, not in the feeling of superiority to other people, but in superiority to one's lower self and in ris-

ing above circumstance. The burden of establishing the relationship of life-counselor does not lie with the church member but with the pastor himself. For he is expected to be an expert in spiritual matters, to understand the human heart, to have an abounding life, and to possess real wisdom in matters of character. He should become an indispensable adviser.

We have considered the minister as interpreter and as counselor. We now come to the most difficult role of all, the preacher as prophet. The prophet of old, as has often been said, was not a foreteller, but a forth-teller. The burden of the Hebrew prophets was the call to righteousness. Their frank expressions were usually addressed to leaders, to the priests, even to kings. They literally cried out for justice for the unprivileged and the depressed. They were not popular and were often persecuted. They hit existing evils and were called unpatriotic. They were constantly combating false prophets, who were "false" because, as Jeremiah said, "They caused the people to trust in a lie." They were in frequent conflict with the prevailing priesthood, the recognized ecclesiastics of the day. One commentator says that a prophet is one who "stirs the popular conscience by confronting it with the moral demands of God." Some of the prophets defined "the good" as social justice. They insisted that the true worship of God is the service of man.

We admire the prophets at a distance of twenty-five centuries, but do not like them among us. We stone

them quite as effectively and sometimes as venomously as of yore. And yet, how we need them! And farmers as much as other people. The prophet in the country pulpit will surely preach justice for country people; he will also tell them of their own sins. Perhaps the severest test of a living church is whether it heeds or harasses its prophets.

Appropos of frank speaking by the pastors I quote from an anonymous letter from a parson in one of the issues of the *Christian Century* last winter:

"If my parishioners are fervent about anything, it is about being satisfied. Ethical criticism of affairs in our contemporary world is one of the arch-blasphemies. Not only does it shake faith and mar happiness, but is apt even to cast 'un-Christian' reflections upon the doings of some of our 'best citizens.' Also, it carries us into fields where religion is not concerned, into economics and politics. If nothing more, it is sure to give offense to some of our church's heaviest contributors. For all their Bible learning, my parishioners do not yet know how and why Jesus of Nazareth died."

Another claim upon the country preacher is suggested by a friend of mine.

"In the matter of the ministry, we must press for a superior type, but we are sadly in need of a ministry to children. We should have a woman worker to every three ministers at least. So far as the spirit of the ministry is concerned we now are in sad need of a new appeal based upon the more sacrificial element and that will bring into the ministry of the rural churches men of the Oberlin type. The example set by city pastors is devastating. The acquisitive instincts are developed and as a consequence

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

the message and ministry to a false economic and social order is nullified at its source. The country church is now in need of a generation of prophets who have an understanding of the modern world and its destructive influences on the home, men who see the social injustice under which the farmers are suffering and who, like Amos, are ready to lead out a crusade for righteousness in order to save for society its very foundations, the country home and the farm."¹¹

Are we asking for the impossible when we plead for this type of minister in the town and country church? Does it call for a "big" man? Surely it does; fully as good a man as the school superintendent, or the county agent. And why not? It calls for a man not only well educated but properly educated; not only well grounded in fundamentals but trained to sense rural situations and to understand rural people.

There are special temptations in the country parishes, the temptation to be indolent, for example, to settle down into a monotonous, rather easy-going existence. Some of this comes out of sheer discouragement with the situation, lack of appreciation by the people, difficulty of association with fellow-preachers, all of the drawbacks that are generally recognized in the typical country pastorate. Or, on the other hand, the active man may dissipate his energies.

The country minister, however, has special privileges. He has the privilege of living in a rural environment. Whether this is a privilege of course depends upon

¹¹ From a private letter from a leader in rural church work.

whether he loves the countryside. No man should permit himself even as an apprentice to serve a country church unless he loves the country and admires country people. If the rural minister is the pastor or one of the pastors in such a rural community parish as we insist upon, he has more opportunity than all except the gifted few in the cities to become a real leader and to make his work count toward transformation of life.

The pastor, above all others in the community, should be both teacher and exemplar of the art of living. It is a high calling and a difficult role. But how otherwise can the message of the more abundant life be effectively proclaimed and its fulfilment vitalized in the daily living of the multitude?

The rural community parish probably calls for what is denominated a multiple ministry. That is, a staff of two or three, possibly more, specialized full-time servants of the church.

"The larger parish which is generally visioned when the term is used, is the one which has resources sufficient to support a multiple ministry and departmentalized work. This sufficiency of resources may be due to unusual financial means within the area, or it may be the result of a persistent education of the people to give. The many, and not the few, provide the support. The departmental leaders are all trained specialists, and are sometimes called ministers of worship, ministers of education, and ministers of parish activities. Each person has a free hand in promoting activities belonging to his department, although he can ask and receive help from other members of the staff whenever there is need. The staff members all preach on

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

Sundays at the numerous outstations. By means of frequent conference, each one of the parish ministers knows just what the others are doing, so that there is no overlapping or duplication of effort. This most elaborate type of larger parish might be considered a demonstration parish, but the field is not chosen for demonstration purposes and does not exist for that end. Size, efficiency, and importance are usually the result of a long period of development. The most noteworthy larger parishes usually possess interesting stories of small beginnings."¹²

I want to pay a brief but heartfelt word of tribute to the country minister. First, to those of past days who from the beginning set their faces to a difficult and sometimes thankless task. Many of them were not only heroes in action but of heroic stature in mind and heart. Today there are in service thousands of devoted men, most of them working under the greatest of handicaps. Among them are many who are successfully building a new type of town and country church, pioneers worthy of all praise. I am afraid that in general the rural church does not sufficiently exalt its minister. Have we outgrown him? Do we no longer need him? Let us put him in a place of leadership. We will follow him not because he is a *preacher* but because he has an indispensable message for us, a message vitalized in his own person as well as dramatized in his office.

THE CHURCH DOMINANT

We are repeatedly brought sharply to the major issue suggested in this theme of the relation of the

¹² Dr. Malcolm Dana, in pamphlet on the Larger Parish.

Christian enterprise to rural people, which is that of the dominance of the church. How can the church dominate in a rural community?

Let us make sure that we are thinking in terms of a community program; that we are ambitious to see the essentials of civilization available to country people. What are these essentials? Health of body, economic efficiency, social justice, adequate means of education, re-creative leisure, sound culture, the religious motive. There will be appropriate agencies that endeavor to provide these requirements. We have already discussed them.

When this town and country church is urged to take command of community development, it must not be supposed that the church as an organization is to take over the activities that now reside with the farmers' organization, or the school, or the agricultural extension service, or the fraternal organizations. No man is wise enough to mark sharply the divisions of function between social agencies in the rural local community, although it is fairly evident what the main tasks of each of them are. The main task of the church is not so much to be an agency of activities as it is to inspire and to direct all activities. Even this is done not because the church asserts itself as an organization, but because this group of people who have allied themselves to the church get from its ministrations and from their fellowship, from its teachings and from its example, ideas and ideals of personal character and of community development that

THE RURAL COMMUNITY PARISH

give direction both to daily life and to the social contacts of the entire community.

The essential thing is that there shall be genuine church leadership of the community—leadership in the sense of giving direction, of setting up ideals, of moralizing methods, of emphasizing mutual aid. Perhaps in this way the church will be able to secure the correlated program for community building in which economic, political, social, educational, and religious affairs may be combined in a consistent plan of advancing all the true interests of all the people of the community.

EAST AND WEST TOGETHER

THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE BEGAN HIS LAST report with these words:

"American agriculture is not a separate, but an integral part of the world's economic system, and it is always deeply affected by financial, industrial, and social conditions at home and abroad. It is more affected by foreign conditions than is American industry, because it depends more heavily on the foreign market."

The world view of the place of agriculture in international affairs is also stated in unmistakable terms in a recent publication from Geneva:

"Beyond doubt, agricultural questions lie at the very heart of the general problem of the world economic depression. Agricultural classes, unable to sell their products at a remunerative price, restrict their purchases of industrial products. The crisis, which is seriously affecting the situa-

tion of millions of farmers and lowering their purchasing power, has a grave effect on the industrial market. The peasant whose income is diminishing reduces his expenditure; he lives on the food provided by his holding, but diminishes or suppresses his purchases. The most numerous of all classes of consumers is subjecting itself to severe restrictions."¹

Thus we have to consider world forces as affecting agriculture. We cannot disengage the future of the rural billion from general industrial and commercial tendencies, political rearrangements, the menace and costs of war, social trends. Doubtless those who recognize the international character of our agricultural problems think in terms of Europe, Latin America, and perhaps Australia. We must include Asia and even Africa. India and China, with a combined population of not less than 750,000,000 people, will eventually become large consumers of manufactured goods, and, as they seek to pay for those goods, possibly competitors of our farmers. These masses of small farmers in the East potentially are also co-operators in the sense that as we learn to plan an orderly economic world they will have to be taken into account and will have a large place in the plan. The farmers have never been sufficiently mobilized for world-peace. I am sure the American farmers who have suffered from a diminution of the demand for their surplus wheat in Europe would sympathize more keenly than anyone else with the million

¹ *The Agricultural Crisis*, p. 11, Volume I, of the Economic Committee League of Nations, Geneva, 1931.

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

Japanese farmers who have been desperately hard hit by the diminution of demand for raw silk.

THE WORLD CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

Our present interest in these world-wide relationships is not chiefly on their own account, but whether Christian forces in all the continents can be brought to bear upon the development of rural peoples. There are those who believe there is no other path to the goal of an adequate rural civilization. "It is the function of religion to unify mankind." If we are serious about such a goal, we will adjust our thinking and planning to the conception of a world-wide Christian enterprise. We will minimize denominational interests, national boundaries, class distinctions, racial antagonisms, and magnify the duty and privilege of Christian people and Christian institutions in all parts of the world to co-operate in a great crusade to make the rural world increasingly Christlike.

It is the purpose of this lecture to discuss some of the questions involved in the work of Christian missions in the villages of the Orient. You are asked to lay aside for the time being the conception of missions you may have that is based on the past alone. For there is a new basis for missions. It is authentically set forth in the significant words adopted at the Jerusalem Conference:

"As together, Christians of all lands, we have surveyed the world and the needs of men, we are convinced of the

urgent necessity for a great increase in the Christian forces in all countries, and for a still fuller measure of co-operation between the churches of all nations in more speedily laying the claim of Christ upon all the unoccupied areas of the world and of human life."

A secretary of one of our oldest mission boards says that the purpose of missionary work is "the permeation of the world with the spirit of Jesus Christ."

HINDRANCES TO RURAL WORK IN THE EAST

The rural work has to face the hindrances that confront all missionary enterprise. The aroused spirit of nationalism is resentful of the superior attitudes of the western nations and convinced that national self-assertion is necessary to national self-development. The West is under suspicion, including western culture and western religion.

There is a sad disillusionment in countries to which missionaries have been going concerning the character of the West. The East asserts that the individual and collective conduct of western people does not square with the teachings of Christianity, and that western nations are miscalled "Christian nations."

Denominationalism with all its triumphs in the foreign field is now a serious hindrance in many places because it often divides and weakens the Christian enterprise. The last meeting of the Christian Unity League said in regard to co-operation in missionary work: "The problem of missionary expansion has vital relations to the interests of Christian unity. There is

a growing sentiment of disapproval of the competitive and inevitably uneconomic duplication and overlapping of missionary effort in the non-Christian world."

One is told repeatedly in the East that there is a spiritual hunger among the masses that is not satisfied by the form or rituals of existing religions. And yet another hindrance to the Christian advance arises out of a doubt as to the unique value of Christianity. Are not existing religions quite good enough for the people who hold them? There is, no doubt, a growing regard among missionaries for certain values in some of the indigenous religions. But what has the Hindu religion to offer the villager of India that may relieve him of his disabilities? In many respects it is a distinct bar to progress, as for illustration the worship of the cow, whatever its psychological value may be, results in a decided overpopulation of the bovine tribe. Unfortunately a large proportion of them are poorly fed, and from our point of view practically worthless.

There is a curious hindrance that arises in the process of seeking to secure church membership. Those critical of Christianity call it "proselyting." Gandhi was quoted a year ago as saying that he would deport the missionaries. He denied this, but in his correction came out against proselyting. Perhaps missionaries have overstressed church membership as an end in itself, and might well emphasize church membership as a fellowship of like-minded and like-purposing individuals, and a league of service for the good of others.

There are other hindrances that lie not so much in any peculiarity of the life or culture of the people as in forces that are world-wide and that will have to be met by the Christian enterprise all over the world. The Jerusalem Conference decided that secularism is the universal foe of all religions. We do not know how far communism will permeate the East, but there is no doubt whatever of its marked influence upon the minds of the educated classes; thus far communism has not welcomed the Christian teaching.

There is in the East a wide gap separating the intelligentsia and the villagers; hence we have both a growing urbanism and a slowly but surely emerging agrarianism.

At the beginning Christianity "had to compete, not with high and noble religions, or with philosophies; its first task was to break the bonds of ancient superstition and set free the yearning hearts of men from fear of magic spells and the crafts of darkness." It is still so today among the villagers. In India, it is not Hinduism at its best that governs the minds of the masses, but fear, superstition, a thousand village gods. The most successful preaching among these villagers is the changed life. And I have seen no other force in the Orient, save the Christian gospel, changing or attempting to change lives. Beyond all preaching of the church the potent gospel is the actual demonstration, by Christians, of a superior life. This is essential in winning a place for the Christian enterprise. During

the past five years in South India more than twenty thousand people from the high caste Hindu communities have joined the Christian church, and it is said on the best of authority that "a most potent influence bringing about this remarkable movement has been the changed life of the outcaste Christian community who have been living in their midst."

Another hindrance is now slowly disappearing, because the principle is gaining acceptance that the church is a means and not an end. No one doubts that a church strong in members is indispensable for the spread of Christianity. But mere members, mere organization, mere forms, absence of the drive for usefulness, do not appeal.

There are other special difficulties that inhere in the rural work itself, such as the dire poverty of the people, their overwhelming illiteracy, the temptation to scatter the Christian forces, lack of provision of personnel trained for successful work among the villages, a scarcity both of missionaries and of national Christians who are steadily and intelligently at work which directly affects the village people.

Mention is made of these hindrances to the Christian enterprise in the so-called missionary areas partly to indicate practical difficulties and partly to enforce a principle that has been recognized by all too few of those interested in missionary work either in the field or at the home base. Christianity simply must "outpoint" these other forces. It must meet them not on their own

ground but on higher ground, and with a potency that arises not alone from its unique message and the unique power of its Leader, but also because it has a more adequate program of social reform than has any other preaching. A Chinese Christian has observed that contemporary Christianity has failed, in so far as it has failed in China, because it has not been able to transcend nationalism and racialism, and that what it needed above all else is love and social justice, and a working program by which these may be realized.

It is interesting to observe how some of the great leaders of mass movements have been affected by Christianity. Sun Yat Sen called himself a Christian. Gandhi denies that he is a Christian, but he seems to have been fundamentally influenced by his study of the New Testament. Lenin made no place for religion, and yet there is scarcely any other teaching of Christ more persistent than relief for the masses. Kagawa makes Christianity the warp and woof of his doctrine of social reform.

HINDRANCES FROM THE WEST

We must not imagine that all the hindrances to successful missionary work are in the East. There are also limitations that arise in the West. One is told, for example, that the heaviest millstone about the neck of Christian progress in the eastern lands is the belief that the so-called Christian nations are really un-Christian. The ancient East was first puzzled and then disgusted

when it discovered that a man or a country labeled Christian could do so many things that were obviously un-Christlike.

"The religion which the West preaches is Christianity; the religion which it practices is nationalism and commercialism. We have carried both our preaching and our practice to the Orient, and now are greatly astonished and quite embarrassed to discover that China has accepted the religion which we practice and questions the religion which we preach." ²

If one should assert that we might well cease to use the words "Christian" and "missionary," one would be misunderstood. But it is a fact that in the East many ideas such as militarism, greed, sense of race superiority, have come to be associated with the Christian West. It is not at all uncommon to discover men opposed to "Christianity" but welcoming "the religion of Jesus."

The moral bankruptcy of the West is widely held in the East. The Great War, the imperialistic attitudes of the western nations toward the East, the motion pictures may account for this. Many Chinese students in America, at least those who have not had free access to American homes, go back with unfavorable impressions. In Japan, one of the saddest experiences for our missionaries is to discover that a Japanese young man who had thought of America as "the perfect country" had come back from his first visit to the United States disillusioned and disheartened.

² Monroe, Paul, *China a Nation in Evolution*, p. 11 (New York: The Macmillan Company). Used by permission.

I am persuaded that the greatest single "hurdle" in Christian work in the Orient is the semi-paganism of the West. Christianity is judged by its fruits. Unfortunately it is likely to be judged by its bad fruit more frequently than by its good fruit. An immediate reaction in India to Miss Mayo's book was a group of volumes, nearly all of them reciting conditions in the United States in regard to lawlessness, serious crime, racketeering, lynching, divorce, and so on through the whole glorious story! Though we may make light of the reply, the sobering fact is that most of these accusations were carefully and authoritatively documented. They were true. It is interesting to note that Miss Mayo is recently reported in the press to have stated publicly that "every trouble existing in India today is social in origin, due to a lack of ethical principles, such as were brought by Christ into the world. We must look to the missionary for this inspiration, and the future India will align itself with him."

THE RISING TIDES OF RURAL WORK

The significance of the rural aspect of the worldwide work of Christianity was set forth at the Jerusalem Conference in these words:

"Specific attention to rural needs by missions and churches is necessary, in part because of the numbers of people involved—nearly a thousand million of them—and the great issues of Christian civilization at stake; but also because the rural people live apart from the centers of wealth and population, their occupations differ in many

respects from those of industrial and urban places, and many aspects of their institutional and group life have no counterpart in the city. Moreover, this great branch of mission service, in all its implications for Kingdom-building, is not now sufficiently covered, either as to policies and programs or as to specially trained leadership and adequate financial support."

During the last three years there has been a series of conferences in South Africa, India, Japan, China, the Philippines, bringing together men and women thoroughly familiar with the Christian work in the villages, who have worked out policies and methods which it is interesting to know are substantially harmonious with those announced at Jerusalem. There are evidences of deep interest in other countries.

In India the report of a nation-wide conference said: "We are sensible of a new interest in rural problems on the part of missions and churches, and we gladly pay tribute to the splendid work being done in the same field by official and non-official agencies; but we must state our conviction that a task so vast and complicated as rural reconstruction calls for a more comprehensive, united, and resolute endeavor." This pronouncement is being vigorously followed up.

In China the National Christian Council has for several years had a competent and influential rural work secretary. The Christian church is not nearly so strong numerically in China as it is in India, and it will of necessity move more slowly, but conferences in North China held a year ago, made up of working pastors very

largely, succeeded in mapping a program fully in line with the Jerusalem Conference.

The Japanese Christian Church has not gone very far in rural work, but a few devoted Japanese leaders and a small band of missionaries have pioneered and are now ready to enlarge their service. The first of Japan's conferences on rural evangelism held less than a year ago declared for an aggressive and organized movement among the thirty million peasants of Japan. The National Christian Council has recently appointed a rural secretary, a man who has been successfully working for several years in one of the rural districts of Japan. Kagawa has stood consistently for a Christian social order among the farmers as well as among the factory workers, and his "Peasant Gospel Schools" for training local leaders are a skilful adaptation of the Danish folk school.

In Korea both the Young Men's Christian Association and the combined forces of missionaries and churches are working on a co-ordinated program in that distinctively rural country of twenty million people.

There is in the Philippine Islands the strongest rural church I have seen.

In Africa, the economic conditions of the natives are such and the territory in which they live is one of such magnitude that there has not yet evolved a concentrated all-around rural policy, but the educational work is based on the best experience of the West in reaching comparatively uneducated populations.

It is doubtful if one church member in a thousand in the United States has the slightest conception of the work done by the agricultural missionaries who have gone out from this country during the past thirty years.³ Two achievements alone have justified all that has been attempted by the hundred or more men who may fairly qualify as agricultural missionaries. I refer to the Agricultural Institute at Allahabad, India, which represents the vision and vigor of a striking personality, Sam Higginbottom, and the College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of Nanking, China, which under the leadership of Mr. J. H. Reisner, has become the most effective college of agriculture on a private foundation in the eastern world.

There is emerging a broader purpose of using the Christian forces in the East to take leadership in the effort to evolve a more Christlike civilization among the village masses, recognizing that a similar task is at hand in the West and that, therefore, rural missionary work is one phase of a common world task of the Christian enterprise. Consequently there is new emphasis upon rural work as a field not only immense in its size and significant in its import, but also one presenting special problems and requiring special methods. A new type of rural missionary is being evolved by these new demands. A definitely specialized and prepared personnel is needed for rural work.

³ See *The Story of Agricultural Missions*, Hunnicut and Reid, Missionary Education Movement.

In those countries that are called missionary areas the church numerically is weak relatively, but it has an influence out of all proportion to its numerical strength. In India and in China especially the work of agricultural missionaries has made a distinct contribution both to the economic welfare and the ideals of national leaders. A Chinese philosopher of the old school, Liang Shu-min, whom I met in Peking, asserted that Chinese culture is essentially rural. If this is true, it suggests that if the Christian religion is profoundly to affect Chinese culture it must win the rural folk by transforming their points of view. Sun Yat Sen once told a missionary friend that the best service the missionaries could render to his country would be to organize the villages of China on a Christian basis.

The Roman Church has become thoroughly aware of the significance of the rural question. It has of course been a great missionary church, but today in all the lands of the Orient it is strengthening and enlarging its service in rural parts and is evidently committed to a large, expanding, and vigorous program among these great masses. There is no evidence of lessening, much less of withdrawing from, the enterprise. There is no note of defeatism so far as the outsider can discover.

Dr. John R. Mott in his notable lectures on this Foundation a year ago said of the rural work:

"The rural field constitutes not only one of the greatest areas of neglect, but also one which presents claims of the utmost importance upon the attention of the world mission

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

of Christianity. These problems are not of merely academic interest but of supreme concern."

THE NEW PROGRAM FOR RURAL WORK

The Jerusalem Conference of 1928 crystallized growing convictions as to the importance of the village for Christianity and the need for a new approach. It proposed three main avenues in this approach: (1) Emphasizing personal religion, but a religion for the whole man. (2) Seeking a rural civilization that shall be "Christian to the core." (3) Using the local community as an area of concentration of effort, with a program of service in which both the personal and the social aspects of religion shall be welded.

Out of all these conferences, "beginning with Jerusalem," and out of the rapidly increasing number of definite projects for work among the villagers, there is emerging the outline of a new program for rural work. This program roots back into a new missionary purpose. The old purpose was to win individual converts, to save souls, to build a church. The new purpose is equally to redeem individuals; it seeks to free them from bondage to their sin and from handicaps that stifle or limit the more abundant life. But it seeks also a redeemed society, a Christian social order, a Christian civilization, the Kingdom of God on earth. It desires to assist the indigenous peoples to build a strong community-serving church.

The main features of the new program as it is being hammered out in the field may here be outlined.

To persuade and retain the peasantry it is needed that not only shall the preaching be in "a tongue understood of the people," but the essential ideas of the message and their implications for the lives of the people must also be understood by them. For we are asking them to surrender age-old ideas for concepts both new and of foreign origin. A classic statement of the message of Christianity for these village masses was made by the leaders in Christian rural work in India two years ago. They said:

"It is well that we should at the outset state the conviction that underlay our thinking and determined our findings. To us, rural uplift is of the very essence of the Gospel of Christ and therefore an integral part of the Christian message. Its sure sanction is Jesus Christ himself. . . . We see village life maimed by many avoidable evils and dwarfed by unnatural disabilities. All these are barriers that hold back the abundant life that Jesus Christ came to give, and we cannot rest till the barriers are down. We count it then our duty and privilege to give the good news of redemption to our brothers and sisters in rural India and to give it in deed as well as in word. Regeneration and not reformation is the immediate necessity; character and not comfort the ultimate goal; but we do not forget that regeneration is the beginning of the Christian life, and character-building a long and slow progress. While, therefore, the appeal must ever lie to the individual conscience we must remember that man is a social being, a member of a human family whose life touches his at every point, and that character is molded by climate, history, and environment as well as by religion. Redemption to be complete must unfold the wide and deep range of personality and reach out in healing purpose to the world in

which man lives. Christ lays claim to all life, and we owe it to him to make the claim good. We seek, then, to bring in the Kingdom of God; to create a better climate in which the human spirit with mind unfettered can 'glorify God and enjoy him forever'; and it is because we think it possible to build up a rural way of life that will hold at its heart the Spirit of Jesus Christ and accord with his standards that we can call upon Christian men and women to give themselves without reserve to this essentially Christian task...."

The Christian enterprise in oriental lands is deeply interested in an all-round program of rural reconstruction, which includes provision for the health of the people both curative and preventive; educational facilities not only in the schools but through mass or adult education; improvement of economic conditions by better agricultural practice, a larger measure of co-operative endeavor, and the reorganization of village industries; help for home makers as a crucial need, for the conditions of the village women and children make a special appeal; facilities for more play and recreation.

All these needs are generally recognized in the West, are by no means new to missionaries, but are now emphasized and unified into a substantial working program for the rural community. Wherever possible, the government is encouraged and expected to carry on this work, but in countries of great populations the government resources are utterly inadequate to fully meet even the more elementary requirements.

Ideally the various items in this plan for rural com-

munity improvement will be carried on simultaneously in co-operation and unity of effort. But the church of course has a peculiar function in this correlated program. It has a Christian message to proclaim, a Christian nurture to provide, and a Christian leadership to encourage. The church, therefore, should be "a central driving force," maintaining its own organization but seeking always to permeate the entire community with the Christian spirit.

Through all missionary history the question of strategy has been a serious one. So long as any creature of mankind remained to whom the Gospel had not been preached, there was the conviction that the disciples of Him who gave them their missionary mandate had come short of their duty and their privilege. Yet in India, for example, after a hundred years of work and with a Christian population of six million people there are still over six hundred thousand villages in which there is not a single Christian; only seven per cent of the villages of India have Christians in them. Nevertheless, the newer emphasis is upon concentration rather than expansion. There are two devices that are growing in favor. One is to choose a local area as a unit of work. In India it is called "the rural reconstruction unit," in the Far East "the rural-community parish." It consists of a group of contiguous villages situated in an area that may be perhaps five miles in diameter. The purpose is to devote the energy of the Christian enterprise both to building a strong church

membership in this unit and to carrying on either directly or through the activities of government this wide-ranging correlated program. In the organization of the rural community parish, that institution which is central in the sense of obvious activities will probably be the community school. From the standpoint of idealism and of the activities of adults it should be the church. Co-operative societies play a large part.

The second device is that there shall be a cluster or group of contiguous local units forming an area or district for Christian work. In this district there will be a group of Christian leaders who will be advisers and specialists in evangelism, religious education, health and hygiene, agriculture, village industries, and so on. The heart of the matter is the selection of areas of concentration in which a well-rounded program will be inspired by the purpose of taking the Christian message to persons that they may be redeemed from all forms of their bondage.

To carry out such a program as this there must be a far greater degree of unity in missionary work than has heretofore prevailed. In some cases there have been actual church unions, but probably the greatest single force for united work is found in the fourteen National Christian Councils which are now in operation in eastern lands. These Councils represent practically the whole Protestant Church in most countries and serve as a clearing house of ideas as well as a means of practical

co-operation. In some cases they are enabled to employ special staff members for particular types of work such as religious education. But much yet remains to be done in this unifying of the Christian enterprise. There is no more important problem to be faced.

There is a new emphasis upon investigation as a basis for enlarged programs and greater efficiency. Not only has the West sent out commissions to make studies, but the indigenous agencies are themselves setting up community studies and as they have funds will undertake projects of fundamental research. They see the need of a scientifically ascertained body of knowledge as a basis for recognized activities.

News from the field shows not only an aroused interest but a vigorous and widespread effort of Christian forces to participate, and indeed to lead, in rural reconstruction, by the use of the technique and program just outlined.

A certain mission in South India reports a list of agencies now at work as comprising an agricultural institute, a village school supervision department of a teachers' training school, an industrial institute, a women's industrial home, a college and a high school, a medical school for women and a theological seminary. A half-dozen government departments have their district headquarters at the center of the mission area. In addition there are several non-official organizations and individual Christian, Hindu, and Moslem leaders who would be glad to help in a campaign of rural

progress. It is proposed by this mission to correlate all these activities and agencies into a service for the communities roundabout on the basis of the principles already adopted by the National Christian Council of India. This plan reveals in striking fashion the new rural missions. Let no one be concerned lest the evangelistic note will not be heard. The gospel message will be heard by more people and will be presented more effectively than ever before.

Missionary policy needs to give fuller recognition to the importance of an appropriate approach to the main classes or groups of the population. Heretofore we have thought of sending "missionaries" to a foreign land. Now we must think of sending co-operators, associates, to help the indigenous churches build themselves into the lives of the people. And we are beginning to see that to do this most effectively we are obliged to consider the difference between classes. The two great social groups are, of course, the urban masses and the village masses. Urban work and rural work differ not in principle but widely in method. A successful rural worker must be "rural-minded," for example. The co-operative society that succeeds in the city will probably be a consumers' society; in the country it will be a producers' society.

A third group to be reached is relatively small but decisively influential—the intelligentsia, or more concretely, the students. But these superior persons are to be no longer just "educated" in some general fashion.

They are to be trained as leaders in one or another of the fields of service requisite to bring both urban and rural groups to a more adequate life. The importance of capturing the idealism and life service of college youth cannot be overstressed. Unfortunately the college men of the eastern countries today are giving themselves very slightly to other than distinctly political problems. These problems are of course particularly challenging and appeal as well to the spirit of adventure. But the villages need the intelligent study and the life devotion of educated youth.

It will now be seen that rural missions are not agricultural in the technical sense. Rural work is not a department like medical work or education. You will note that the program is practical, clearly tangible, and exceedingly important, and thus meets many of the excuses that ordinarily stand in the way of support from the West. There is no less stress on the distinctly religious, but there is a broadening of the conception of the function of the Christian enterprise.

Are missionaries still needed? I am afraid there is a growing skepticism in the United States as to the need of more missionaries. Some mission boards either out of financial necessity or as a matter of policy are withdrawing their forces. I am of the opinion that if the Christian enterprise expects to take leadership in building a Christian rural civilization it will need to support more rather than fewer associates from the western churches. Certainly the rural work calls for more

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

rather than fewer missionaries provided the proper ones are sent. We must give of our best. Definite training for the rural field becomes indispensable, and when the missionary is in the field specific work of the type of which he has been trained. The colleges and theological seminaries that are preparing young men and women for foreign Christian service need both to broaden and to specialize their courses for this purpose.

The rural work if pressed vigorously calls for more money, although adjustments in the field will serve to demonstrate the new programs. If the Christian enterprise of the West is really serious in its conviction that Christianity is a world religion, it will be obliged to supply largely increased financial resources. The new rural work is designed to make the work far more efficient but the task is such a huge one and the countries in the East are so poor that no appeal for funds can be couched in too strong terms.

THE FOREIGN MISSIONARY

I wish to pay a word of sincere tribute to the foreign missionary. In some circles it has become the fashion to decry the missionary and his adherents. Without doubt, there are missionaries who are narrow and bigoted and inefficient and perhaps indolent. The missionary is human, has his faults, has made his mistakes. As Dr. Peabody has said, "Lack of flexibility, incapacity to adapt one's self to environing and alien ideas, fixity

of mind and condescension of manner—these have been throughout all Christian history the intellectual obstacles to missionary success." But during the past three years I have been thrown into rather intimate contact with hundreds of them in a dozen countries and I cannot speak too strongly of their devotion, their intelligence, and the worth-whileness of their work.

It is doubtful if many American citizens realize the part that missions are playing in international good will. Not long ago there appeared an editorial in the *Chinese Recorder*, the journal of the Christian Movement in China, in which it named the College of Agriculture and Forestry of the Christian University of Nanking as one of "the modern ambassadors of co-operative good will," and speaking of a recent report of the college said: "Such a report has a more encouraging message for the world than all the influenced utterances of political white or blue books."

The function of the missionary needs to be restated. He is truly an evangelist but not in any narrow sense. He is rather a Christian associate, a counselor and adviser, a bearer of the experience of the older churches for the benefit of the newer churches. Clearly it is a waste of time of missionaries to be compelled to run a machine. Their counseling, advice, teaching gets its value only in part because it is technically correct; but their larger influence comes from their personalities as Christian gentlemen and gentlewomen. There is no doubt but the function of the missionary is changing and

this fact gives rise to much of the discussion about the need of the missionary. What is wanted now by the indigenous churches is co-operation and co-operators and not management and managers. The identification of the missionary with the indigenous people is important and difficult; important because there is no other way to influence, difficult because of the questions it raises about standard of living, attitude toward nationalistic aspirations, and so on.

I should like to challenge certain types of young men and young women of wealth as missionaries. To paraphrase a line of Shakespeare, the rural missionaries are moved to undergo an enterprise of honorable-challenging consequence. But they must be "thoroughbreds." It is a challenge not only to a Christian leadership but to adventure, to initiative, to influence. Some of the very finest missionaries I have met are men and women possessing private financial means but giving themselves unreservedly to the task.

Prizes, careers, are less obviously present in rural work, hence the appeal to serve the missionary cause will always be essential to get superior persons. Service in foreign lands has its attractions as well as its difficulties, its trials as well as its triumphs. This rural work calls for persons of great native skill and superior training. "These shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." This is the great commission, and it still holds over centuries and will hold so long as the words of the Master are needed to redeem

human lives in any part of the earth. Men and women of high intelligence and deep devotion are needed as preachers, even more as interpreters, co-operators, researchers, comrades, and friends.

HAS AMERICA ANY SPECIAL DUTY OR PRIVILEGE?

America's influence in the world was well put by E. L. James in the *New York Times*, August 19, 1930. After saying that our influence in Europe is due almost wholly to our economic and financial power and not to our moral power, and that our rich men and rich country are respected for money and not for morals, Mr. James concludes: "There is not yet a realization in the United States of the great political power our material position has brought us, and whether we use that power when we feel it, as other nations, or whether we will use it in a new and different manner—there is the greatest question in world politics."

At the moment it seems out of place to boast of our wealth, and in view of our constant unwillingness to take leadership in the political affairs of the world, it may not be inspiring to speak of our privilege. But we have resources and credit to an extent that makes it difficult to refuse to recognize that we have both duty and privilege. We are the richest nation in material things. We have a century-old tradition of participation in world-wide Christian movements. We have a million students in our colleges and enough of them have a sufficient idealism to carry far.

IS WESTERN MONEY NEEDED?

At present the supreme trial of the foreign missionary arises out of the lessening funds available from the mission boards. It is as if the general of the army had ordered his shock troops to make an advance into the very heart of enemy territory and then had cut the service of supply. If one were to make even a minimum list of needs for this rural work alone, he might be thought a visionary. The West can help by sending money both directly from the churches and by special gifts for many enterprises that can scarcely be maintained out of the comparative poverty of the countries of great mass populations. The western churches in recent years have not been keeping up their quotas for missionary work. This fact constitutes a tragedy. Hundreds of missionaries and missionary projects are suffering this dearth of funds which can scarcely be attributed to the present depression because it has been observed for a decade. But the real tragedy consists in the lukewarmness of those at home who fail to see that more rather than less is needed.

Perhaps the situation demands the establishment of several permanent rural service foundations designed to make grants-in-aid to projects intended to ameliorate the living conditions of the village masses at points of greatest need, such as—

1. Mass education.
2. Village health and hygiene.

3. To meet special needs of village women and children.
4. Agriculture, technical and economic.
5. Research.

Such foundations would tend to release the churches for requisite assistance in the area of evangelism and religious education.

The old appeals have lost their power. Even the original simple purpose no longer suffices. Both purpose and method need restating in a fashion to command a renewed loyalty of the churchman, to draw substantially increased financial aid from the philanthropist, and to awaken a new enthusiasm for service on the part of youth. World-wide co-operation in pressing the Christian enterprise throughout the world must be translated into words of fire, but balanced by practical projects of aggressive advance.

We need a campaign of education of a Christian constituency both in the East and the West and of philanthropic people generally on three points:

1. As to the nature and significance of the new approach to village work.
2. As to method.
3. As to the new function and enlarged service for rural missionaries and indigenous Christian leaders.

CO-OPERATION FOR A CHRISTLIKE CIVILIZATION

The fundamental issue before the western church is no longer whether it shall "send missionaries" to Asia

and Africa or Latin America. The issue is whether the western church intends to co-operate with the church already established by missionaries in the East. Whether out of its longer experience, its relatively great wealth, its magnificent manhood and womanhood, western Christianity shall heartily, generously, fraternally put itself by the side of indigenous Christians in all the other continents, for a common crusade for Christ, not primarily against other religions, but that the Christian spirit may reign in the struggle of these great but belated peoples to reconstruct their civilizations.

It must not be supposed that in this world-wide co-operation of the Christian enterprise all the gains will come from the West to the East. There is also light to break upon the West from the East itself. Missions from the East to the West are needed to explain background conditions; to interpret the conceptions of Christianity itself as it lends itself to grafting upon indigenous cultures; to state needs and desires directly and authoritatively from the indigenous churches; to spread personal acquaintanceship, particularly that significant personalities from the East may be known at first hand and individually in the West. Kagawa of Japan has proposed "The Christian Internationale." I assume that what he has in mind is a great world fellowship of Christians seeking to inject into all world problems the spirit of the Man of Galilee.

One of the most striking utterances from a son of the

East regarding the possible influence of Christianity came from Mahatma Gandhi on Christmas Eve last year. The report by the Associated Press follows:

"Aboard 'S. S. Pilsna,' December 24—Mahatma Gandhi, who is a Hindu, but is more familiar with the Scriptures than many Christians, pointed today to the 'Sermon on the Mount' as the way of redemption for a suffering world.

" 'If mankind is to live in a manner befitting its dignity,' the Indian Nationalist leader said in a Christmas pronouncement, 'it must observe the fundamental principles of truth, justice, mercy, and love enunciated two thousand years ago by the great Man whose coming upon earth the whole Christian world celebrates tomorrow.

" 'Christ's Sermon on the Mount is the loftiest piece of moral teaching the world has ever received. It is a calamity that the present-day world seems to believe it impossible to reduce Christ's teachings to practice, whereas I believe it is.'

" 'Like millions of others, I have derived infinite comfort from the Sermon on the Mount,' he continued. 'If the doctrines there proclaimed by Jesus were practiced by the human race we would have no wars, the world would not be rent with economic troubles, racial hatreds and spiritual disunity, and there would be no need of a disarmament conference.'

" 'Later, as Gandhi's evening prayers were interrupted by the sounds of revelry from the first-class salon, where a masquerade ball was in progress, he added gravely:

" 'I never have been able to reconcile myself to the gaieties of the Christmas season. They appear to me to be inconsistent with the life teachings of Jesus.

" 'How I wish America could lead the way by devoting the Christmas season to real moral stock-taking and emphasizing the consecration of all believers to the service of mankind, for which Jesus lived and died on the cross.' "

THE CHURCH IN COMMAND

IN SOME RESPECTS THE MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE UT-
 terance at the Jerusalem Missionary Conference
 four years ago was made by a layman, R. H. Tawney,
 the British economist, when he said: "Christianity must
 command either the whole of life or none. Either the
 church will be overwhelmed or it will go on to control
 the whole social order."

In these lectures we have been considering the more
 significant aspects of the situation and trends among
 the rural people of the world. We have endeavored to
 discover the value of the Christian religion in bringing
 these folk to the more abundant life of body, mind, and
 spirit. We have called attention to some concrete
 methods as well as general policies that may be helpful
 in giving the American church real leadership in rural
 progress. We have discussed the common problem of

the Christian forces in all lands, as they seek to co-operate in larger measure and in more vital ways for service to the rural masses. As we bring this brief study to a close, we must try to tie together its various aspects in terms of an imperative summons to organized Christianity.

For I think Professor Tawney was right. And I propose no less a challenge to the Christian forces of America and of the world than that the church shall take command of the task of developing and maintaining an adequate, and therefore a Christian, rural civilization.

That this challenge is flung out in the face of obstacles that may seem and that may prove insuperable, is clear enough. I do not deny the Himalayan character of these difficulties. We cannot console ourselves by looking away from them. We must face them. And we must seek diligently, even passionately, for ways to conquer them. There are several towering summits that stand between us and any measurable realization of success for the Christian enterprise in commanding the direction and the degree of rural progress.

The call for the church to take command of rural affairs will encounter its first high peak of difficulty within the church itself. Many clergymen and members in the western churches, and of missionaries in the field, sincerely believe that it is not the task of the church to project itself into the whirlpool of the world's complex, pressing, tumbling troubles. Our challenge to the church, they think, demands something inappropri-

ate for it, a work that is not the "job" of the church. Says one: "Our goal is not a perfect society in this world, but an eternal life in the Kingdom of God." Another holds that a way to a better world here and now is that "men and women full of holy realism would go about their tasks with a living faith in their Lord and Savior and for that very reason, without programs and ideals, do what it was possible to do in their situation." And outside the church there is a chorus of protest whenever organized Christianity endeavors to influence business or public affairs, on the ground of "meddling with things external to the province of the church and about which it knows nothing."

Another obstacle in the way of putting the church in command of rural affairs is the apparent absurdity of it. Even in our own country the church includes less than half the farmers, in many regions not over a fourth of them; in some communities not more than one farmer in eight is actively identified with the church. In India perhaps two in one hundred of the villagers are Christians; only seven per cent of the 750,000 villages of India contain any Christians whatever. In China not one peasant in a thousand is a Christian; less than that in Japan. Moreover, the church is divided, both in the West and in the East, not alone by the great rift between Catholic and Protestant, but into scores of sects within Protestantism. There is no grand command; how can there be the grand strategy required in such a stupendous undertaking?

There are those who doubt the practicability of the most fundamental teachings of the religion of Jesus. This group has many spokesmen, but perhaps the matter has never been put more baldly than by a speaker at a Christian University who said: "That all men are brothers is a noble and Christian thought, but human experience has demonstrated that it is, at best, nothing more than a pleasant theory."

There is weakness in the church itself, in the wide space between teaching and practice, between profession and performance. Many earnest social reformers are convinced that the western church is too deeply committed to things as they are to become a force in reconstruction, and particularly to serve adequately the masses of mankind. Is there the slightest likelihood that business, industry, politics will admit organized religion to the seats of the mighty? The whole conception of expecting the church to command either urban or rural civilization does look absurd, a product of wishful meditation, an adolescent's vision or an obsolescent's dream.

Another obstacle is the indefiniteness of the plea that the church shall take command. Command of what? and how command? There is no unity among forces making for rural change. There is indeed no common agreement as to the ends of rural progress. The church holds no widely accepted program for a better rural social order. How can it lead?

There is no doubt a difficult technique in such leader-

ship. Agrarian reform is notably complex. Rural organization is proverbially discouraging to its promoters. Here is a puzzling, baffling situation all over the world, a world dominated by tremendous and apparently unmanageable forces. How can we expect the Christian church to have even appreciable influence, much less to take distinct leadership?

It is obvious, I trust, that my own views range with those who assert with William Adams Brown that "we no longer think of our task as simply the conversion of individuals, but as including the Christianization of the society in which we live." We hold that because the Christian enterprise carries the deepest message we know for the redemption of mankind, it must lead in creating a just and co-operative social order. I shall make no attempt to answer these formidable objections directly, but wish to outline some constructive suggestions for church leadership in rural affairs which I hope may be convincing as to its need and practicability.

Three reasons are here advanced as justification for demanding that the church take command of rural reconstruction.

1. The self-preservation of the church itself requires that it shall lead. Says Harold Luccock:¹ "The only way effectively to defend the faith of Christ is to project it into all life." "A church which never tackles the master iniquities of its age will never dominate the heart and mind of the people of its age." But what else will

¹ *Preaching Values of the New Testament*, p. 282.

dominate? We have entered upon revolutionary changes in all aspects of life. The rural people are not immune to these changes. Somebody, some organization, some movement, will respond to their needs. If one is not at hand, the masses will move anyhow. Unless the church can lead, it cannot even follow—it will become impotent. The shell of its influence may remain, but power will have departed.

2. The rural world needs the church. From what other source than from the Christian Church may there come a message of redemption for the rural multitudes? From Hinduism, for those in India? From Confucianism, for the Chinese? From Buddhism, for the Japanese? From Humanism, for the Americans? From Communism? Kagawa pleads for a Christian social order, because it will mean the reign of love and not of hate, and indeed protests against the "so-called church which preaches faith and fails to love."

3. The redemption of the rural social order is the essentially inclusive task of the rural church. I like the words of J. Z. Hodge, the rural-minded Secretary of the National Christian Council of India, who says: "I deprecate the term, a social gospel. The Gospel is of necessity social, for the simple reason that the individual to whom it appeals is a social being. Man cannot be extracted from his community and live." A just social order is possible only under the reign of moral principles, and, as Rauschenbusch said, "these

moral principles find their highest expression in the teachings, the life, and the spirit of Jesus Christ."

It is possible that the phrase, "the church in *command*," suggests autocracy, authority, institutional control. Not at all. The church should have a social program that represents a Christian interpretation of practical means of human betterment. But in the last analysis it is outreaching and upreaching ideals and inner power that command humankind. The church can so believe and so preach and so act that out of it shall flow wells of water for the fructifying of all the wide stretches of human effort and the healing of the nations. The Christian church should be the dominant rural social institution, because it will weigh the values of country life, uphold its ideals, supply moral and spiritual energy to all rural endeavors, and thus integrate the forces that make for a fairer social order among rural people. For we seek, for all the world, "a rural civilization that shall be Christian to the core."

BUT WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN RURAL CIVILIZATION?

Some ten years ago I heard a representative of western Christianity expound the social purpose of Christian missions to the distinguished and able Chinese philosopher and reformer, Dr. Hu Shih. After listening to the statement Hu Shih replied: "I agree with your purpose to make better men and a better society in China, but why call it Christian?" Not alone from the Chinese philosopher, but from all sorts and con-

ditions of men, in all parts of the world, doubt is cast upon the claim that Christianity holds the key that will unlock the gates that seem to hold back the ceaseless urge of mankind toward a better economic day. When indeed is a society Christian? What would make it Christian? What right have we to talk about a "Christian" civilization, either rural or urban? No answers that anybody can give to questions like these will satisfy, yet one must indicate his own conception of a rural civilization that could fairly be called Christian.

It is necessary by way of an important preface to remark that those who are content with an answer that rests upon the numbers of churches or of church members, or church activities, or even church pronouncements, as sufficient evidence of a Christian civilization in any country or among any group, are all too easily satisfied. Unfortunately, in and out of the church, to "Christianize" is to seek to bring people within the folds of some church. The Christian church should generate a Christlike society. Yet such a society is not an automatic outcome of the presence of an organized church. It is a goal to struggle for. We seek a type of human relationships characterized by certain attitudes that we regard as fundamental in a truly successful society, and that we are convinced flow only from the mind of Christ. We are to remind ourselves also that civilization is not a static thing, not something that can be achieved. It is a process of growth. Hence we cannot tell exactly what it is; we can only indicate some of

the conditions we think it ought to secure for humanity, conditions such as those that are now to be stated.

1. A Christian rural civilization will insist that every farmer shall have a fair opportunity for full personal development. "Human beings are not instruments, but ends" in themselves. We may not, however, conclude that personal opportunity consists merely in "rugged individualism," which crowns the strong and ruthless, and leaves the weak not merely the prey of the social carnivora but refuses them the ministrations of agencies and persons who may inspire and guide them toward a wise use of opportunity. We must distinguish between individualism and individuality.

The fatal weakness of individualism is that, like most other "isms," it so overstresses a good that it becomes a bad. The belief that the unrestrained pursuit of individual self-interest will secure a just social order is quite as indefensible as the doctrine that state ownership and control will of itself insure a moral use of material and human resources. As Dean Pond of Harvard Law School says, "The greatness of an individual today consists in the greatness of the co-operative enterprise in which he has a personal interest."

Individuality is not fostered by an isolated independence of the individual, but by his association with others for the deepest purposes of life. It is not developed by a militant selfishness. It is not generated by compulsion whether of autocracy or of collectivism. It springs from the root of personal opportunity, grows

in the air of social solidarity, matures its fruit as mutuality, co-operation for worthy common ends, mutual sacrifice for the good of the group.

2. A Christian rural civilization will value intangible good far above tangible goods. We must unlearn the fallacy that civilization consists in the possession of things, in the invention and the use of conveniences, or even in the refinements of life. We are not to condemn things in themselves. It is difficult for the underprivileged masses of the Orient to share spiritual good unless they possess enough material goods for physical vigor. Nor do we condemn the progressive American farmers for desiring and demanding comfort. But we would insist upon a reign of good will, an application of moral law to daily work, an emphasis upon the character and cultural values of the farmer's experiences. The spiritual is not to be separated from the economic but is to transfuse and transform it.

3. A Christian rural civilization will provide a satisfying community life for farmers. "The more intelligent peasants left the country for the towns where they might enjoy the advantages of civilization. The rest stayed because they could not get away."² This quotation comprises a whole philosophy of civilization which works to the detriment of both country and city. Country life must be on the whole as favorable for humanity as city life on the whole. And there can be

² Benner, Thomas E., "Porto Rico and Its Problems," in *Foreign Affairs*.

no adequate rural civilization unless the great majority of the people on the land can live a satisfying life. If a rural situation is considered satisfactory when one per cent of those on the land control practically all of it, or when only a fraction of the farmers are intelligent and prosperous, we have by no means attained our purpose.

4. A Christian rural civilization will seek the beautiful as well as the true and the good as a possession and privilege of the rural masses. Beauty of surroundings, beauty within the home, access to art, employment indeed of arts like music and drama in community life, and above all treating community development itself as a great art. "Is not the creation of a fair society the supreme and inclusive art? Our democracy might be a work of art, a joyous whole, rich in form and color, free but chastened, tumultuously harmonious, unfolding strange beauty year by year."³

5. A Christian rural civilization will seek to conserve and strengthen the principles of economic and social democracy among the people on the land. By reason of its very nature agriculture should be easily democratized. The farm land should be democratically owned and controlled. This fact seems to establish the significance of the family farm. But co-operation is also a hall-mark of democracy. The price we are obliged to pay for a democratic agriculture must be paid first of

³ Cooley, Charles Horton, *Life and the Student*, p. 143 (Alfred A. Knopf, 1927).

all by the farmers themselves as efficient producers and intelligent citizens, and in their collective capacity as a body strongly organized both to protect and advance their own interests and to contribute to the whole world's progress. Urban society has its part also and should count a prosperous and superior body of land workers so important to the national life that it intellectually and sympathetically and of habit co-operates through government and voluntary social institutions for the economic, social, and religious satisfactions of the farm group.

6. A Christian rural civilization will secure a permanent agriculture without caste. The roots of the farmer must go down deep if his activities are to flower and to fruit in an abundant life. He must love the farm life, have a deep attachment to the land, yet without serfdom and with no compulsion to remain. We want permanence in agriculture but not stagnation. Adjustments there must be, but not upheavals. We want the way open from country to city, from city to country. But agriculture cannot be carried on with frequent shifts, either social or economic. Apparently the method of management of the land is basic in a permanent agriculture. It is equally vital to an adequate rural civilization that the people who live in a rural community shall be relatively long-time residents of the community and by reason of self-interest at the least have "a stake" in the community and its institutions.

In America we are in some danger of a rural caste

system, not perhaps by creating a great mass of peasants who are only operators of small holdings, but rather by developing a multitude of tenants relatively transient in their tenure, too weak to rise to ownership, and too unadaptable to leave the land for the city. A proper farm program cannot be maintained on any given area unless it is carried on steadily by intelligent operators who know the land intimately and who follow the best farm practice. A voluntary but comparatively permanent succession of family owners and occupiers of the farm seems to be the most promising prescription for rural social health and vigor.

7. A Christian rural civilization will invest farming morally if not legally with a public interest. Agriculture will be socialized in the sense of intelligent recognition that the farmer's task of supplying society with soil-grown products is an indispensable social service. Hence urban society will be interested in "a square deal" for the farmers. We will then witness the outworking of the spirit of the remark of Walter Rauschenbusch when he wrote: "A Christian social order must be such that it will develop and educate mutual interest and good will, and equip workmates with that sense of comradeship and solidarity to which they are entitled."⁴

Doubtless the principle just announced raises the question of property and stewardship, one of the most puzzling of all the moral issues to be settled among rural people. The possession of land was for centuries

⁴ *Christianizing the Social Order*, p. 179.

the badge of power, the goal of the underprivileged. Life on the land, even though the farmer was a tenant, has given scope for a certain personal freedom. The farmer must learn like everybody else that he is a trustee, a steward, and has in his keeping, under laws that are made by society itself, the most fruitful and precious material possession of mankind. Morally he dare not use this possession solely for selfish ends.

8. A Christian rural civilization will have discovered means for urban and rural co-operation. That some business men see this need is evidenced by the report of the Business Men's Commission on agriculture a few years ago, which stated that the real values of farm life are as significant for the city as for the country and that the preservation of these values calls for a co-operation that "inspires the whole body politic with the will to serve the common cause." There has never been co-operation between urban labor and the farmers. The wage worker wants high wages and cheap food; wages comprise the chief charge in supplies and services the farmer has to buy; low food prices spell meager income for the farmer. A vicious triangle. A way must be found for fair economic relationships.

9. A Christian rural civilization will find a way to compose racial conflict. Racial conflict brings out, perhaps, the worst and the best in human nature. It lays bare fundamental antagonisms, economic and social, breeds injustice and barbarity. Yet there is no other field of human adjustments in the present age that is

more certain to produce the courageous pioneers of a better way, nor one in which the Christian spirit can more surely prove the leaven in the measure of meal.

10. A Christian rural civilization will have had its full share in the permanent outlawry of war. Farmers probably suffer more and gain less in a great war than any other class of society.

11. A Christian rural civilization will support a planned agriculture and country life. Based on research, it will utilize the major social forces and the needed social agencies in deliberate social self-direction. This is the gigantic, the inclusive task. We do not yet know enough to make a complete blueprint of such a stupendous project, but we do know that we will need to set goals of achievement, and to initiate co-operation among all the forces of progress. A proper agricultural policy will seek justice *for* farmers, social efficiency *of* farmers, and co-operation *by* farmers.

Possibly we can get still closer to a conception of what is involved in planning a Christian rural civilization by reciting some of the limitations to most of the current proposals for stabilizing business.

They fail to put human welfare as the chief goal of economic coherence.

They fail to accentuate the basic need of attempting to break the bonds of the underprivileged masses, the majority of whom are rural folk.

They have a propensity to view the entire issue through urban eyes, and thus to slight consideration of

rural people either as potentially greater consumers of manufactured goods, enjoying a higher standard of comfort, or as more efficient producers of soil-grown materials.

They fail to sense the rising tide of revolt among the farmers of the world.

Frequently they ignore the global or world character of the entire problem.

Both knowledge and insight must be the foundations of a planned agriculture and country life. Out of a widening of research in the field of rural need, and a more generous interpretation of the implications of an adequate rural civilization, perhaps we may find emerging a new inclusive science which we would call "Rurol-ogy, the science of rural society."

12. A Christian rural civilization will discover a method of implementing the principle of good will as the outstanding characteristic of human relationships. We are not accustomed to look to our current periodicals for religious leadership, but at Christmastide we find the man who sits in the "editor's easy-chair" of one of our great magazines saying that love "is the great need of mankind, the cure-all for the pains of earth."⁵

THE CHURCH AS LEADER IN RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

How can the church gain command of the task of a world-wide rural reconstruction? Along such lines as these I suggest:

⁵ *Harper's Monthly*, December, 1931, p. 128.

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

1. Let the church present a convincing message to farm people that exalts, stimulates, and guides the development of a personal Christian character in a rural environment.

2. Let the Christian rural people as they go about their work seek to fill their own daily life with the Christian spirit and ideals, and to influence community opinion and action on behalf of Christian solutions of personal and community problems and relationships.

3. Let the church formulate a persuasive message for a social order in which farmers may both secure their just rights and perform their full duties as citizens of the nation and of the world.

4. Let the church as a group of Christian people try to discern practicable methods of realizing and demonstrating the application of the Christian message.

5. Let the church study carefully the trends and currents of the rural advance.

6. Let the church seek to unify all endeavors for rural progress on the ground that it has a major interest in establishing "the righteousness that exalteth a nation."

7. Let the church train a suitable personnel for leadership in the world's Christian enterprise among rural people.

I have no purpose to elucidate these points, for they have been discussed more or less fully in the former lectures. But I should like to dwell for a little upon a few implications.

The message of the rural church must be so convincing to farm people that they cannot escape accepting it as indispensable. The church will then have authority, not of tradition but of both intellectual validity and spiritual winsomeness. Religious beliefs do matter, but they must be beliefs that really do matter. Farmers must see that here is a message that generates power to release from injustice and ignorance, as well as from sin, hatreds, intolerance.

Beyond all preaching, all doctrine, all forms is the influence of the Christlike individual. In Japan, they speak of "demonstrational evangelism." The preacher of Christianity proves his case not by what he says but by what he is and by what he does. This is a platitude of course, but like some other platitudes it is basic truth. Someone has called attention to church members who "would be equally shocked to hear Christianity doubted or see it practiced." A prominent teacher of religion asserts that in a certain standard dictionary one of the definitions of "Christianity" is "conformity to the teachings of Christ in life and conduct"—this definition is marked "rare"!

It is interesting to note the emphasis on character that is being voiced in current comment on the depression. For example, the reviewer of one of the recent biographies of Washington said: "It is important that we have biographies to help us understand his acts and policies, but it is still more important to have books which will perpetuate the influence of his character."

The National Thrift Committee has coined a new word—"ethnomics"—to signify "how necessary the interrelation of moral conduct, sound economics, and good citizenship is to the life of any country."

An editorial in the *New York Times* last January had these words: "We let success go to our heads. We gave free rein to the gambling instinct and the acquisitive instinct. We believed ourselves the complete masters of our fate, whereas we were only riding the waves of circumstance." Perhaps the most subtle menace to moral stability in American life is the success of enterprises that bring reward not for skill in useful work but for shrewdness in gaining unearned money. The speculative spirit among farmers is morally as destructive as it is anywhere else.

The psychologists tell us that we do not know how character is formed; and one of them asserts that we do not even know what character is. Yet a leader in this field recently said of character education that "its method is the response of person to person, to teacher, to characters in history, biography, fiction, and story and to the active movers of the social order. Its technique is greater use of all those intimate values that nestle close to the heart."

One's morality depends in the last analysis upon his idea of the abundant life. The church can show the farmer wherein the abundance of farm life consisteth. The church can press the truth upon farmers that personal character is decisively influenced by one's daily

work. The character-building values of farming are superb, both in prosperity and in depression. The church has a special message to farmers because they deal constantly with natural forces, and are completely dependent upon them. The so-called "laws of nature" to the believing soul are God's habits of work to which we must all conform. Learning these laws and obeying them—that is the secret of good farming, and also the basis of rural character and rural religion. We must believe that there are great moral as well as physical "laws" in the universe and that Christ had deeper insight into those moral laws than anyone else we know. Here is the leadership of personality at its highest.

Our test of forces that are molding the world's life is whether these forces release and enlarge human personality or whether they bind and narrow it. When we speak of redeeming the individual we must surely include redemption from everything that weakens or handicaps the development of personality. Some of the existing handicaps of humanity are the limitations of heredity, but many of them are distressing aspects of the social environment. It so happens that not less than half the people in the world today who are seriously handicapped are people who live on the land—rural folk. The church beyond any other institution should be the conservator of basic human values in the countryside. Personal ideals, family integrity, community morals, sympathetic outlook toward other groups—these the church must foster.

The obligation of the best farmers toward other farmers is a matter of deep consequence to the community. There are prosperous farmers who have not the slightest care for those in the community who are doing less well. The church can establish the principle that strong farmers must help the weaker ones. No permanent and adequate rural civilization can be built on any other foundation than that. By the same token strong business groups must help the farmers. This form of service is not philanthropy but co-operation, not charity but economic comradeship. Organized power may be directed toward selfish ends, and the farmers may be as prone to abuse that power if they get it as are any other group. Here again the church ought to help in mobilizing and directing the finest ambitions of rural folk for the common good of society.

Agriculture from the Christian point of view may be regarded as a conquest of the soil for the service of man—both producer and consumer. The farmer therefore has a deep social obligation which the church should never permit him to forget. He has a duty toward unborn generations who will have to live from the soil of which he is the temporary trustee.

The church is not especially concerned with business in the strictly technical sense. It is vitally concerned with the objectives in economic life, with the morality of economic method, with the extent to which human values are made or marred in the economic process, and with the general spirit pervading economic life. Thus

the rural church is not immediately interested in the details of wheat production or the method of wheat marketing, but it is desperately anxious about the honesty of the whole process, about what happens to the farmer and his family by reason of the labor performed, the reward gained, and the use made of the income. The rural church wants the farmer to grow wheat successfully, but it is far more zealous about growing the right sort of wheat farmers successfully.

In considering the function of the church there are three basic questions that the church may interest itself in: (1) How may the moral principle at stake be actually applied in practice? (2) What part if any should the church as an organization take in improving conditions? (3) What are the ways by which Christian laymen may make their influence felt on behalf of the Christian ideals as they mingle with other groups?

There are those who assert stoutly that the church has no business in business, no business in politics. I think people who take that attitude are either insincere or have an inadequate idea of religion. It has been said that "the only real progress of mankind is contained in Christianity, provided it becomes the internal, organizing force of society." But an energizing force has to have expression. Religion must be concrete or it is of only limited value.

There are some who agree that the church should seek the solution of social problems, but doubt if it should make a blueprint of methods. Truly the church

is not an economic association nor a political body. But these words of a prominent layman, one of our great business leaders, are worth attention. Speaking of the task of the church, he said: "Enough of economics, of sociology, of government, and of business she must know to tell us exactly what is our part in a Christian treatment of those problems," or "else she must be content to see her teachings always brushed aside as inapplicable."

The church must set the goal, and she must also understand how to implement the principles of reconstruction. Take, for example, the problem of land utilization in farming. We treat this problem chiefly on the physical side as a means of production, and on the economic side as an aspect of the capital of the operator. But it has also its social side. The man who farms is a trustee of its resources. He has no right to abuse it. We think of the forms of land control chiefly as a business question. But there is a character value in the privilege of individual control. So with a hundred questions that on the surface seem to be economic or political or social but which at bottom are moral and sometimes thoroughly spiritual. From this angle there is nothing in the rural problem that is foreign to the church or that is not amenable to its teaching.

It is quite possible that the organized church will never as an institution be the reformer of society; that it will cherish and promulgate ideals but leave to other agencies the work of implementing these ideals into

legislation and custom and habit of society at large. Walter Rauschenbusch says that as a historical fact "a volatile spirit has always gone out from organized Christianity and aroused men to love freedom and justice and their fellow-men. It is this diffused spirit of Christianity which has been the chief moral force in social changes." I think the church should be an influence both directly and by diffusion. If the fourteen million Brahmans of India could be enlisted for lifelong service to the best interests of the three hundred and thirty million non-Brahmans, Christians would rejoice at the transformation even if not a single Brahman became a member of a Christian church.

Nor is it stretching a legitimate use of the words to consider the Christian enterprise as inclusive of all the activities of people that are permeated with Christian idealism. The greatest triumph possible for the church would be a successful pouring forth of its true spirit into the whole range of the living and activity of society. The issue before the Christian enterprise as it seeks influence among the rural masses is not alone to organize religion within the church, but also to so permeate society with the religion of Jesus that all human relationships as well as inner individual lives will inevitably organize in keeping with that religion. An organized church composed of members who themselves exemplify Christ's way of life seems to be essential to the larger aim. But the more inclusive end is not to be submerged in the less inclusive. At a conference on un-

employment and related subjects, held last autumn, one of the speakers called "for a crusade led by the church looking toward a spiritualized economic order." Shall not the rural church enter such a crusade on behalf of farmers? Shall it not speak adequately for their deepest interests?

The United Church of Canada a short time ago set up a commission on evangelism with the distinct understanding that "evangelism must be stressed to include social adjustments such as would harmonize with the principles of the Kingdom of God Movement." The church has felt strongly the impulse of Kagawa's Kingdom of God Movement in Japan. After Dr. Kagawa's memorable visit to Canada last year two lines of thought were developed, one the promotion of prayer, and the other the preparation of a statement of the aims of the Kingdom of God Movement as applied to Canada. The statement has not yet been given publicity, but it is understood to be thoroughly along the lines of the conviction that the gospel of Christ applies to every part of human life, that every form of human relationship must be brought into harmony with the mind of Christ, and thus affirms the practicability of the Kingdom of God.

In all parts of the world today there is more thinking, greater zeal, deeper study than ever before among those engaged or interested in trying to advance rural civilization in terms of the religion of Jesus. But much of the discussion is in compartments, much of the

effort fragmentary. The time therefore is ripe for a concerted attempt to synthesize thinking and integrate activity. The church should lead in this attempt.

In order to synthesize thinking, it is essential to provide constant, alert study of trends in rural life that may affect or that may be affected by the Christian enterprise. We should have a sound basis for deciding what tendencies should be abetted or opposed by the Christian enterprise. The problems that rural folk the world around have in common should be approached, investigated, discussed, and interpreted on the Christian basis. Hence, the pressing need of far more adequate scientific research and sympathetic interpretation in the entire area of rural conditions and rural social controls, as a basis of the Christian advance.

To be more specific, let us ask the church to urge such projects as the following:

1. A more nearly scientific approach to the difficult and elusive problem of discovering the processes and applying the dynamic of the development of personal Christian character in the rural environment. We believe as Christians that the only adequate dynamic is the power of Christ. But we need to know more about how this power may work itself into the mind and habit of rural youth in such fashion as to be an abiding force and a constant guide to conduct.

2. We need a penetrating study of the controlling ideas among rural people, within different racial cul-

tures and varying economic conditions. For there should be a franker and fuller recognition, as well as a deeper understanding, of those ideas and forces that are now prevalent in, or that are being aggressively presented to, the rural mind, which are the chief competitors of Christian social idealism. For example, what is the significance of such apparent facts as—

- (1) Widespread traditions and superstitions.
- (2) A supercilious and exploitative urbanism.
- (3) A communism passionately prophetic of privilege to the masses, but atheistic and perhaps really anti-social.
- (4) A secularism all but universal.
- (5) A growing agrarianism.
- (6) "White-collar" education.

3. We should have careful experimentation with and repeated recasting of the technique involved in building and maintaining a Christian rural civilization. We must pioneer and experiment with new ways of organizing rural people, but we should endeavor to base such experiments on the results of solid fact and sound theory.

4. We need persistent and frank, but deeply friendly, assessment of both helpful and futile or outworn tendencies in the rural church. The church should be an alert, adaptable social institution. While holding to basic ideas and ideals its methods should be as progressive as new needs require.

5. There should be a careful study of the fiscal capacity of rural areas to maintain social institutions

effectual for an adequate rural society. This question is one of the most important practical problems in the entire range of conditions for strong rural church leadership.

6. We must attempt to discover the terms of a practical working co-operation between city and country people and agencies. Scarcely a beginning has been made in this endeavor, so vital to any hope of putting the church in command.

7. I should like to see a co-operative study, by authentic biblical students and agriculturists, of materials suitable for "A Farmers' Bible Commentary." The Bible would become a new book to multitudes of rural people if it could be presented in all the freshness of its allusions, and the implications of its teachings, to people who live in a rural environment.

8. There is need of a clear restatement of the purpose of the Christian enterprise among rural people and a widespread promulgation of its essential features. We deal with the church too much as a piece of social machinery—not enough with the use to which it should be put. It is a matter of first importance that the aim of the Christian enterprise among rural people to help usher in a rural social order that can fairly be called "Christian" shall be clarified in principle and made concrete in terms of reasonable tests of its character, the forces to be depended upon for its growth, the institutions to be relied upon for its practical success, and the means of correcting its program.

9. There should be constant study of the best means for the selection, the enlistment, the training, and the continuing education of men and women who will give their lives to religious work in this rural field. Leadership is our main concern.

10. There should be study of a plan by which there will be those on guard to compel people to listen to claims of rural interests, to invite the farmer to his chair at all the round tables of discussion and planning for a better world, to insist that he shall have a place in the sun. Why cannot the church essay this role?

11. We must map bolder plans and find a better way by which the rural church will lead the rural people against war, against industrial exploitation, against the antagonisms between city and country, against racial injustice.

12. The new statesmanship of the rural Christian enterprise involves a restatement of purpose, a larger co-operation, new investigational agencies, and a fresh and enlarged supply of men and means. But it requires such a new reformation within the rural church itself, as shall result in close integration of Christian forces in America and throughout the world. The Federal Council of Churches, the Home Missions Council, the Foreign Missions Conference, and possibly other bodies, should be correlated into a co-operating unity on behalf of the Christian approach to rural people both in the West and in the East. Denominational agencies in America, including Foreign Mission Boards, should

THE CHURCH IN COMMAND

more completely unify their approach to a common problem. In each of the main missionary areas there is now a National Christian Council which should be supported cordially and its functions gradually enlarged, so that it may represent the unified approach of the Christian enterprise in the area of its service.

AND IF THE CHURCH DOES NOT LEAD?

Walter Lippmann recently said in the *New York Herald-Tribune*: "When the tension of the crisis relaxes, we shall find ourselves in one of the great eras of reorganization and pioneering."

A few years ago in the *Congregationalist* there appeared a letter from a labor-leader written as comment on a statement of social ideals which the Congregational Council had just adopted, and in the letter occurred this suggestive sentence: "A strictly economic interpretation of life, as made by some labor leaders, cannot furnish the moral enthusiasm necessary to realize what we all are striving for, viz., a social order based on brotherhood." Reinhold Niebuhr says:⁶ "The church must either fish or cut bait, or it cannot quarrel with those who seek a new order by means of organization outside the church, unless it seeks as a church to create a new social order." Harold Laski, writing in the *Nation*⁷ wants "to see the rapid erosion of organized religions" because "they make men satisfied with, or complacent

⁶ *The Note Book of a Tamed Cynic*, p. 112.

⁷ January 6, 1932.

about, the injustice of the present social order" and "substitute charity for justice."

Thus the church has to meet the new issues of a new era. What if it should fail? Are we to find the guide to the new day in some other religion than Christianity? In a leadership that is essentially Christlike in spirit but quite outside the church? In humanism? In socialism? We may find that the Christian church will take a vigorous new leadership in the western world but be impotent in the Orient. If so, does the future of the East lie with communism? Or must we join the prophets of doom of whom there is a surprising number these days. In a sermon in New York last winter Dr. Bell, the head of an important college in the state, said that we are in the midst of a progressive degeneration of society, a process that may take a century, more or less. He says that civilization will not long be preserved by tinkering with economic and international machinery. Present conditions grow out of a fundamental maladjustment of individual and social motives. We are led by politicians and bankers without wisdom. "Our age will not learn. Its eyes are closed and its ears are heavy and its heart is fat."

I prefer to cast my lot with a man like Dr. Nixon of Rochester, who said in a sermon on the same day: "In every generation of living creatures there have been those who, in spite of every hardship, hazard, agony, and disaster, did not quit. They constitute our ancestry. We are the trustees of the accumulated heroisms of all the

ages. Why should we quit?" A well-known journalist in reviewing a book dealing with some phases of the history of Christianity closes his review with these words: "We see no evidence that the need of the world is less urgent than it was in those days when a bankrupt paganism had to turn to the love and wisdom of a Jewish Redeemer for the salvation of civilized society. In religion there are tides. But he is a shortsighted spectator who supposes that, because it is low tide, the ocean has disappeared."

I like the words of one of America's leading merchants: "Our ability to serve has completely outrun our plans for service, and we must of necessity evolve new plans looking to a more abundant life for all." "Now that we have discovered that we must wage co-operation with the same intensity with which we have customarily waged war, our religion will and must be a seven-day religion—a religion not of escape from, but of constant, creative participation in, human life."

But we cannot meet the present issues by pronouncements or wishful thinking. We perhaps can learn even from the Russian experiment. Indeed, there are two or three outstanding features of it that we cannot ignore, as they relate to the farmer.

First of all it is a reality. It is going ahead. Its success is not yet assured, but it is functioning. A strong feature of this experiment is that it is based on the fundamental idea that farming is a social concern, that the proper use of the soil and an adequate food

supply are not merely questions of interest to the individual farmers, but are basic in national prosperity, even to natural perpetuity. Moreover, communism promises the great masses of Russian peasantry a standard of living, an access to culture, and even a real freedom, far beyond anything they had under the old régime, and indeed far beyond any of the visions of their rural dreamers. A news cutting states that "today in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics there are twenty-three million children at school, compared with seven million before the war; seventy per cent of the population above ten years old can read and write, compared with twenty-five per cent before the war; and last, but not least, two-fifths of all factory workers throughout the country attend after-work classes for technical instruction."

John Haynes Holmes says:

"What I see in Russia today is the death of the church, but also the rebirth of religion. For religion, to my mind, means a passion for brotherhood, self-denial to the point of sacrifice, care for the weak and downtrodden, an ideal of a better world and a freer life for men, and a united endeavor to fulfil this idea. Religion of this type exists in the new society in Russia. Should we not make sure that it exists in our country as well?"

In the summer of 1931 a friend of mine, an agricultural economist, visited Russia, and concerning the prospects for success he writes me as follows:

"Theoretically I believe that the Soviet agricultural pro-

THE CHURCH IN COMMAND

gram offers a satisfactory roadway to the profitable development of agriculture in a large country with very diversified agricultural resources. I think, too, that it offers an excellent solution for the social problems that beset agriculture in most countries today. It is based on planning for the best utilization of the natural resources and for control of the technique, such as better seeds, the economic use of machinery, introduction of advanced methods, and the like. It provides for an organization of the human resources by the co-operative method, and for the marshaling of these resources to obtain the greatest advantages of large scale production. It provides for the disposal and processing of the farmer's product through co-operative distribution which, if properly developed, should mean a minimum of distribution expense. It grants to the peasants, on the same basis as the industrial workers, the advantages of education, sanitary housing, hygienic and cultural training, and a very much enlarged social life and opportunity. It is intended that all the educational and cultural opportunities that are offered to any people within the Republic shall be offered in like degree to the entire group of peasantry.

"In practice it seems to me that the plan is working out as successfully as could be expected from a plan that is entirely revolutionary. About sixty per cent of the peasants are collectivized; a very considerable percentage of the land is in state farms to which are brought the most advanced applications of agricultural science and technique. There is still a great dearth of capital for agricultural purposes, and there is still a considerable degree of opposition to co-operative production. There is also a lamentable lack of understanding on the part of the peasantry as to what the whole thing is about, but the evident superiority of the state farms and the availability of machinery and technical assistance from the twelve hundred or more tractor and machinery stations is bringing about rather

rapidly, I think, a sympathetic attitude on the part of the peasantry.

"The present success of the scheme is limited, also, by the failure to manufacture a sufficient amount of a considerable number of products to meet the demand of the rising standards of living on the part of the peasantry. It is also limited by the scarcity of capital, a large part of which must be devoted to industrial production. There is a further limitation which grows out of the fact that political plans and propaganda in a good many instances interfere with the most economical agricultural methods. That is to say the political program lays down a certain amount of land to be plowed or harvested or seeded within a certain time. This is not always feasible by methods of good agriculture, but from the standpoint of the propaganda of the plan it is necessary to keep up with the program. I think, however, that these matters will be ironed out, provided that the communist party does not interfere with the agricultural planning experts, and that Russia will solve at one stroke a great many problems of depressed agriculture, ruinous individualistic competition, and the unbalanced spread of agricultural knowledge and technique which we find in our own country."

Of course this business of communism goes far deeper than its agricultural applications. The Japanese Christian leader, Kagawa, himself a Christian socialist, points out four main defects in Russian communism, as follows: (1) That it is undemocratic. (2) That it restricts freedom. (3) That it stifles minorities. (4) That it destroys discussion. But we cannot ignore it.

The attitude of the church toward rural people will be a sharp test of its vitality. It would be indeed the supreme irony of history if the rescue of the under-

THE CHURCH IN COMMAND

privileged masses of mankind should be achieved by a philosophy of class war, a social energy that rejects religion as a dynamic, and a social organization that heaves overboard the whole individualistic régime of the western world proud of its capitalistic power. If the church is to command rural reconstruction it must very soon launch out into the deep. If it stays haltingly near the shore other fishers of mankind will bring the rural masses into their net. If heroic men and women of distinction of mind cannot be enlisted for Christian rural work in America or in the Orient, it will be a sure mark of the decline of organized Christianity. If church members in both city and country cannot strike hands together in a great crusade to make the religion of Jesus dominant in all social reform, we can be sure that we no longer have a living church.

THE RURAL UNDERPRIVILEGED THE TESTING GROUND

"Jesus lived the life of the common people, sharing and glorifying their hardships. Thus he stands for that spirit of brotherhood and mutual service which their life teaches them to value. He is a symbol of the wish to make over the world in such fashion as common people would have it."⁸

The "acid test" of civilization is the condition of the masses. The hallmark of a true civilization is its attitude toward its less privileged members. No glories

⁸ Cooley, Charles Horton, *Life and the Student*, p. 259 (Alfred A. Knopf).

of literature or of art, no triumphs of science or of engineering, no splendors of wealth or of industrial power can compensate for the permanent presence in society of such inadequacy of human living as is found today among at least three-fourths of the population of the world. The masses of China and India are our concern. They are a world menace if ill-conditioned. They may be a world blessing if they can live as men should live.

The *Christian Century* in a stimulating editorial last winter regarding the place of the possible achievements of the church after the depression and urging a specific program to meet such a problem as the present depression which it said was not primarily economic but moral, because it is a problem of human values, went on to say: "Its peculiar responsibility is to find a way of life for society as a whole in which the good gifts of God may be made accessible to all his children in terms of justice and rights."

When Signor Grandi was in America last winter, in his now famous address before the Council of Foreign Relations in New York City he said: "It seems to me that two phenomena characterize this development. The first is the larger participation of the masses in the international relations of their respective countries; the second is the realization of the fact that these relations affect national life more deeply than used to be generally believed." How pertinent are these words to the certainly growing influence of the rural masses

THE CHURCH IN COMMAND

and the deepening significance of the international relations of the farmers themselves.

"If the organized religion of modern life is to mean anything to masses of our fellows, it must walk straight into the jaws of this insensible, remorseless, ceaselessly grinding industrial machine, out of which our greed extracts its profits, and wrest from it the majesty and supreme worth of the common man."⁹ Dr. Hutchinson doubtless has in mind urban industry chiefly. His dictum should apply also to the relation of the church to the rural billion, and his omission is serious.

There is evidence that the American church is awakening to the challenge of existing and widespread distress, despair, perplexity. Church bodies, prominent clergymen in all parts of the country are courageously and clearly stating the case for an aggressive leadership of the church in setting the world toward Christian methods and tests of the reconstruction that is inevitable. However, when economic relationships are discussed in these pronouncements, urban industry is the burden of the plea. I would not minimize by one jot the distressing implications of industrial unemployment, nor abate by a title the need for radical reformation of the terms on which the wage-working multitude may secure "a square deal." But rarely indeed is any notice whatever taken of the farmers' distress, now prolonged for an entire decade. A perusal of books,

⁹ Hutchinson, Paul, *World Revolution and Religion* (The Abingdon Press).

sermons, pamphlets, editorials in the religious press, reports of religious bodies—any material dealing with the social duty of the church in the present hour, rarely reveals the slightest attention to the status of the farmer and the obligation of the church toward the thirty million Americans immediately dependent upon agriculture. And still more rarely is there even an intimation that the Christian church senses a duty toward the eight hundred million poverty burdened peasants of the Orient. It is not inconceivable that as the church girds itself to do battle as never before in all its great history for the masses of mankind, it may commit itself, by its very interest in the urban proletariat, to a terrible injustice to the vastly greater numbers of the rural masses of the world.

We cannot ignore nor minimize the rising tides of unrest and of new hope among the village masses. Such facts as ten thousand tenants strikes in Japan, the rural banditry in some parts of China and radical peasant organizations, the hold of Gandhi on the villages, the whole Russian situation, compel the attention of the church. Village horizons are expanding, communications are multiplying, and political agitation is increasing. The promises of communism have made a deep impression. I would like to think that the Christian teaching has also been a factor in this unrest, for it has preached the value of the individual.

We need a passionate though a deliberate acceptance of the fact that the greatest task and the most

challenging opportunity of the Christian church in its service to rural folk is to secure a far more abundant life of body, mind, and spirit for the woefully underprivileged masses in the villages and on the farms of the world.

The rural underprivileged furnish a remarkable arena for testing the Christian spirit of love and of social justice and of formulating an adequate program for bettering human life. There is no field of service in the entire world that has more possibilities than has the rural field for the initiative and the daring of youth.

Who are the underprivileged? Lack of privileges is not wholly an economic question, not entirely a matter of undernourishment. The middle class villager in Asia is not underprivileged so much because of illiteracy or bad health conditions as because he lacks a chance to improve. There are several hundred million people in the villages of the Orient who are thoroughly depressed, judged from any angle; but there are as many more who, while not so near the hunger line, are nevertheless from the standpoint of an adequate civilization to be classified as the underprivileged.

Is it fair to speak of the American farmers as belonging to the underprivileged? By no means, if we compare them with the villagers of the Orient. But social conditions are relative, not absolute. If we view the entire body of American farmers, and the currents in rural life that seem to have set in, we will see, I think, great hope for that portion of the farm people who are

more fortunate in natural capacity, proper education, and the undisputed ownership of their land. I am obliged to confess to a growing pessimism concerning the future for the great majority.

It is not un-Christian to urge the self-interest of the privileged in trying to improve the standard of living of the underprivileged. The masses as larger consumers and as more efficient producers will be a decisive factor in the economic life of the world. Their physical health will be no small element in a more effective productivity.

A modern prophet has said that "a man's sympathy is a more decisive fact in his activity than his judgment."¹⁰ Does the sympathy of the Christian church lie with people who have property and make profits or with the people who have neither? Professor Cooley says: "One can make progress in his path only by a vigorous assault upon the obstacles and to be vigorous the assault must be supported by a passion of some sort. With most of us the requisite intensity of passion is not forthcoming without an element of resentment." If this is correct, one wonders if a deeper resentment at the wrongs of the underprivileged rural masses may not be needed to spur to a renewed vigor of the Christian enterprise among rural people. A solemn note of warning must be uttered on this theme. The plagues of Egypt were necessary for the release of a whole people from a bondage that required them to make bricks without straw and that ground down their free-

¹⁰ Rauschenbusch, Walter, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*.

dom and manhood. Socialism, communism, revolutionism—all the “isms” that as militant believers in individualism Americans decry and detest, are at bottom answers to the cries of the depressed classes. If the brains and the hearts of Christian people cannot find a way progressively to relieve the underprivileged, some other agency will do it. The world will again be plagued until it “lets my people go.”

Theorize as we may, protest if we wish, the march of the masses is as certain as destiny.

The world dominion of the future will be in the hands of that man, that nation, that race, that social system that shall succor the underprivileged and break the bonds of them that are slaves to poverty, disease, ignorance, superstition, and fear.

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Over the seas from Palestine and across the centuries these words come to us still, even more meaningful than when they were uttered. For today there is no corner of the earth where human beings live in which there need be any ignorance of conditions.

This is my plea to the Christian enterprise, to make its main task that of serving the underprivileged masses, more than a thousand million of whom are rural people.

POSTSCRIPT

[There is appended here some extremely interesting material which shows what rural people and rural pastors are thinking about this question of the church. An article by the author on the work of the rural missionary is also printed.]

WHAT FARMERS THINK OF THE CHURCH

AS A RULE DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING THE COUNTRY church have been carried on by high-minded men who are giving their best to the solution of this problem. The farmer himself has not been vocal on the subject. The author recently had occasion to write letters to a considerable number of representatives farmers in a dozen or more states. And one of the questions asked was, "Is the time ripe for a more aggressive country church movement? Why?" There follow the replies that have been received to this particular question. It is interesting to note that these men and women, whose names were obtained from the state colleges of agriculture and whose views in regard to the church were not known, generally speak of a lively interest in the

POSTSCRIPT

problem. There seems to be among them pretty strong opinion that the time is ripe for a vigorous country church movement provided the church itself ceases the competitive struggle and takes on a larger program.

From Kansas

"There was never a time when the rural church was needed more than now. There should be a turning in that direction now if ever. It has been the case in the past that adversity turns men to God when otherwise they are indifferent. Of course finance will be a difficult problem with the rural church. But where there is a will there is a way. People have money for things less important, and why not for the church if they are interested. It is a poor time for a rural church that is not truly Christian."

From Connecticut

"With the tendency to curtail outside attractions, it would seem a more fitting time to attempt aggressive work on the part of the rural church than for the last ten years. Our own pastor has been very successful in the work in this community."

From Kansas

"More efficient preachers—less competition of preachers and doctrines, regardless of now."

From Iowa

"Almost all conditions point to larger units of activity, civil and social, instead of smaller ones, and yet right at this time the depression has made it necessary to create a program of homemade happiness and inspirational life that is proving very satisfactory. I really believe if we could have young, aggressive, up-to-date rural ministers in our rural communities to go hand-in-hand with such organizations as Farm Bureau, Parent-Teachers' Association, and other constructive organizations, this might be just

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

the time to have that work deeply rooted. There is without doubt a definite reaction toward better community programs, both recreational and inspirational. The rural church of the future would have to have a program broad enough to embody all these activities, educational, recreational, as well as inspirational."

From Iowa

"What would this 'stronger and more aggressive' rural church do? Emphasize social life to produce happiness? Yes, that is good.

"If you mean an intensive study and urging of set definite methods of business methods for merchandising, no, the rural church had best keep out of that."

From South Dakota

"The rural churches we have are dying for lack of financial support. Our preachers find they cannot live on prairie wind any more than the farmers can. The only salvation that would interest our people just now is salvation that is free. We have no money even to pay our taxes. Our produce is selling for from one-fifth to one-seventh of what it did during the war, and we are still paying war prices for all our farm machinery and many other things that we have to buy."

From Missouri

"A stronger and more aggressive rural church can only come with greater finance. That certainly cannot be had at present. There are many other organizations which now take the place in the social life of a community that the rural church once did. Again the radio and the nearness of larger church organizations with ministers of real ability who can provide spiritual food for thought, are going to make it extremely difficult to ever interest the farmer in the old rural church. We are progressing forward, not backward, though it may seem otherwise at times."

POSTSCRIPT

From Connecticut

"Any time is a good time for aggressive church work! In a time of adversity—like the present—it is probably easier to get people thinking spiritually. Of course this is a hard time to raise money. Many persons *are* spending foolishly for movies, automobiles, etc. Many, however, really have not got the money to give. Our local church, in which I am interested, is having hard sledding financially. I fully believe, though, that our trouble is spiritual. With the right spiritual outlook our finances would take care of themselves, even in these parlous times."

From Kansas

"If it is possible to interest farmers generally in a stronger and more aggressive rural church, I believe the present is a favorable time to launch the effort, on the ground that a human being is usually more receptive and alert spiritually when his material affairs are at their lowest ebb."

From Nebraska

"The trouble with the church is the same as our business system. It has not kept step with the progress of the ages. It has confined its work too closely to the churches. We need a more liquid religion, one that will seek all of the cracks and crevices and reach the isolated and lonely—one that will *go to* the needy, and not require the needy to come to the church in order to receive the message of better living."

From Iowa

"A poor time, as we know the rural church. The rural church is, for the most part, supported from the net earnings of the people it serves. Today there are no net earnings in our rural communities.

"Out of this there may emerge a rural church that will do more than hold Sunday school and one preaching service each week, in addition to having an ordained minister on

hand for funerals and wedding ceremonies. It might serve as the social, recreational, and educational nucleus of the community. This will take considerable more physical equipment for the churches as well as a considerable change in habits of thought. At present when a college professor or a banker undertakes to discuss the agricultural practices with farmers they meet a sales, or pride of occupation, resistance that makes their efforts largely non-effective. Then too, if a farmer should venture to discuss finance, banking practice or credits with a banker, he runs up against that same sales, or pride of occupation, resistance that makes his efforts futile.

"Traditions and pride of opinion are two pretty hard nuts to crack. Economic necessity may turn the trick. Picture shows and other amusements features are being abandoned in many of our smaller towns. Farmers cannot travel far to get these. People will congregate together, and if the rural church can present a program that serves humanity, then perchance traditions and instincts can be overcome to the end that a greater rural church can be built and maintained."

From Colorado

"The American farmer must give more time to the home, school, and church. Education is fine. It is the only thing that we can give our boys and girls that somebody can't take away from them."

From Nebraska

"I would call attention to a readers' contest announced in the *Nebraska Farmer* asking for a twenty-five-word letter on 'The Nation's Greatest Need.' The suggestions most frequently given in the numerous replies received were: economy, understanding, courage, practice of the Golden Rule, hard work, limitation of military expenditures, price stabilization, farm organization, and religious faith. It is noteworthy that a large number of the readers emphasized

POSTSCRIPT

revival of religious faith as a solution. From the large number of letters that called attention to the needs for religious faith, it would seem an opportune time to advance the cause of the aggressive rural church, organized and adapted to modern needs. It should have practical appeal which will compete successfully for the farmer's interest and support with all of the many twentieth century diversions and distractions, which in the past few years have undoubtedly caused the interest in church of himself and his family to wane."

From Colorado

"It is my belief that the time is very good to build a better rural church for the reason that everyone knows that some grave mistake has been made somewhere and they are now ready to listen to reason along many lines. However, I believe success will depend largely on the ability of the church to render a more definite service which will relieve present distress, in other words, 'point the way out' in a practical way, again, interpret its message in such a way that it will be clear that it applies effectively to everyday life in business as well as to some future existence."

From Pennsylvania

"My observation leads me to believe that the interest of rural people in the country church is as strong now, or stronger, than it was during the years of so-called prosperity, 1927 to 1929, for example. I believe this is a good time to interest the farmer in the rural church, and I believe he will respond if given good leadership in competent pastors."

From Colorado

"Yes, a good time. Farmers as well as people from other forms of occupation are busy with material things and have neglected the spiritual side."

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

From Maine

"I do not see any reason for trying to interest the farmer in a stronger and more aggressive rural church of the present type so widely prevalent. There is a great field in the development of the larger parish work which I think will have an increasingly effective response among the rural population. In other cases transportation has developed so rapidly that I believe it would be better to concentrate attention on the urban church which could serve the rural population effectively. In other words, the work should be done in accordance with local conditions. Larger parish work has been very effective in Maine where it has been tried, though of course there are some discouraging conditions occurring from time to time."

There is no doubt but the rural church, if it would seize hold of its problem on a national scale with proper vigor and adequate planning, would have the support of many agencies that are not in themselves considered religious. It is heartening to read in the editorial pages of one of our best agricultural papers, *Wallace's Farmer*, published in Iowa: "There are some things that cannot be taken away from us unless we ourselves are willing to have them taken away. Our faith in a Divine Ruler is one of these, and our religion should mean more to us in these times than it has ever meant before."

FARMERS CONSIDER FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Under the leadership of the extension forces of the state there was held at Hartford, Connecticut, last February a meeting of nearly one hundred and fifty men

POSTSCRIPT

and women thoroughly representative of the farmers of the state—representative of types of farming, geographical, local, and rural organization. The significance of the meeting consisted in the fact that they were brought together to discuss mainly not technical and economic questions but the more intangible values of farm life. The writer had the pleasure of addressing this group of vigorous, comparatively young, forward-looking farmers. And he has permission to print herewith the report of the general committee:

CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE FEBRUARY 17, 1932

Report of the General Committee

We resolve not to sacrifice the fundamental values in rural home and community life because of the depression.

We refuse to be depressed by the depression.

We recommend the following nine points:

1. Substitute, where practicable, things we can produce from our existing resources to relieve our available income for those things we cannot produce—raising and utilizing gardens, home-raised meat, milk, fuel, etc. Increase where practicable the farm production of raw materials as a substitute for purchased materials.

2. Maintain high standards of nutrition and health. Redouble efforts—particularly community efforts—toward the prevention of communicable diseases.

3. Improve the beauty of our surroundings—including attention to roadsides, the grounds of home, school, church, and civic property, a judicious amount of upkeep and repair of buildings, public and private, and greater attention to the decoration and beauty of interiors—and to learn to get redoubled joy through co-operation in producing these improvements.

4. Increased spirit of co-operation, expressing itself in marketing and production and in the maintenance of community activities and organization.

5. Foster the development of the recreational, social, and cultural phases of our home and community life.

6. Increase in budgeting, accounting, knowing where we stand, careful guarding of expenditures and wisest use of available funds in home, community, town, and state. Be unusually cautious about going into debt.

7. Make every effort to maintain educational standards.

8. Build greater acceptance of responsibility for the welfare of the group, family, or community, and greater participation in group activities by each member.

9. If the program is to be made effective—if the depression is to build instead of pull down—it must be based on a new appreciation of values and must be effected by the fullest working together of all agencies.

PASTORS' PRONOUNCEMENT ON RURAL CHURCH

During the past few years there have been a number of excellent statements of the rural church problem and program. One of the best that the writer has seen and the latest is the committee report presented to and accepted by the State Pastors' Convention of Ohio held last January:

"We regret that the reports on the unemployment situation and on economic upheaval have made no reference to the specific problems of our rural communities and particularly of the farmers. We hold the considerations of Christian justice demand:

"1. That the plight of the farmer group shall be given sympathetic consideration in the reconstruction of our economic life. That agriculture is still our basic industry and that there is little hope for economic recovery in any program that does not make possible at least an

POSTSCRIPT

average economic income to our farm families. The farmers constitute the largest single group who are buyers of necessities. Not until this group is placed in a position where it can purchase the necessities of life on a larger scale than at present can there be any improvement in industry in general.

"2. That every effort should be made to insure to our rural communities adequate social institutions, including the church, the school, means of recreation, culture, good local government, and in particular the best possible farm home. This is basic in the building of any Christian civilization.

"3. We view with alarm the trend toward industrialized farming. Any system of agriculture that makes for efficient production of crops without regard to the conservation of human value is detrimental to all society. It is contradictory to the ideals and program of Jesus and therefore should be opposed by the church.

"4. We realize the rapid trend toward the integration of life, rural and urban, and the interdependence of the city and rural church. We call upon our city churches and city pastors to share with us the task of ministering more adequately to our rural communities, in order that we may continue to make the contribution of moral and religious leadership to both city and country.

"5. To this end we express the hope that efforts now being put forward to strike a better balance between the salaries of rural and city ministers will continue until we are able to give a demonstration within the ministry itself of the ethical principles and social ideals we are now prescribing for the rest of society.

"6. We join with the committee on comity in urging upon our denominational leaders to use every means at their disposal to remove every vestige of competition and overlapping and to co-operate in the building of strong units of church life in the countryside. In this regard we would suggest to our administrative leaders the necessity of working out a program of composite administration in the com-

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

munities where federated churches and union efforts are effected.

"7. We further commend to all pastors in town and country communities the importance of their co-operating with each other in developing larger parish units, so as to provide the rural people with a more effective and comprehensive program, and to combine all their efforts in a single front to fight the forces of evil that now confront us.

"8. We would call attention to the fact that, despite the decrease in the rural population, the rural community is still the seed-bed and the basic family community. That there is nothing that can take the place of the home in the building of Christian civilization. To this end we call upon all the churches to assist in the development of a morale for the rural church and the rural ministry."

THE RURAL MISSIONARY

By permission of the Student Volunteer Movement there is here reprinted an article prepared for the journal of the movement, *Far Horizons*, and printed in the issue for December, 1931. The article was also used as the agenda of the discussion group at the Student Volunteer Convention held at Buffalo at the beginning of the current year. To those interested in rural work in the Orient the paper may be suggestive both as to the sort of personnel that will be needed and the interest of the western churches in supplying this personnel.

A NEW PROFESSION: ASSOCIATE IN CHRISTIAN RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

I

Beginning with the Jerusalem Conference of 1928, leaders of the Christian enterprise, both nationals and for-

POSTSCRIPT

eigners, whose chief concern is to reach more effectively the village people in the great areas of mass population, have been attempting to restate purpose, recast programs, and reorganize methods. Out of nearly a dozen major conferences in India, China, Japan, and the Philippines, as well as at Jerusalem itself, there has emerged a set of principles of Christian rural work that may be stated broadly as follows:

The purpose is to make the religion of Jesus dominant, specifically in the personal and community life of the village people, and generally in the great rural reconstruction movements that are setting in with significant power all over the world.

The program is to select strategically chosen groups of contiguous villages as areas of local concentration, and in each of these new "reconstruction units" or "rural community parishes" to develop a community-serving church, locally self-supporting, led by a trained Christian ruralist, assisted by his lay members, and counseled by itinerant rural specialists in various fields.

Methods proposed stress "preaching that persuades," but give even more emphasis to "indirect" or "demonstrational" evangelism—that is, concrete service and all-round helpfulness—in co-operation with both government bureaus and such volunteer agencies as co-operative societies, in an effort to meet all the needs of all the people in this new "community," or cluster of villages. This effort includes wide-ranging but co-ordinated activities in educational evangelism, a ministry of health and healing, education of both youth and adults for village life, economic relief, wholesome play and recreation, and particular attention to the needs of women and girls.

If there be a "slogan" of this fresh approach to Christian rural work in so-called missionary areas, it is "Toward more Christlike local rural communities."

These principles are not yet achievements, but goals; they have not been universally accepted nor widely put into

THE CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE

operation. But I am confident that they portray fairly the present trends of thinking and the direction of the rapidly increasing activities in rural work. They have potentialities of completely reshaping the Christian enterprise among rural folk, as East and West more fully cooperate in the task of erecting an adequate and therefore a Christian rural civilization.

II

These new trends of thinking and planning call for new types of missionaries, and if the resulting movement gathers force it will demand larger numbers of missionaries than are now serving in distinctively village work. Speaking broadly, and without meaning even to imply that there is no place for the typical general missionaries, I will say I think their importance is gradually diminishing so far as village work is concerned. The requirement now is for trained ruralists of various types of talent who go out prepared to do specific work. I am not here discussing missionaries who are attached to colleges or high schools for the sole purpose of teaching, but am thinking entirely of those who are to come to grips in the villages with this immense task of Christian rural reconstruction.

Alongside of these new trends, with their new demands upon personnel, there has arisen a change of attitude on the part of the nationals in regard to the function and even the presence of missionaries. This attitude varies in different countries, and among the indigenous leaders in each country. But it can be put quite accurately as a strong desire to have the aid of men and women from the West who are not chiefly managers, but who are experts, counselors, true associates. So I know of no better designation for such persons than "associates in Christian rural reconstruction."

III

As an outline for discussion, rather than as a dissertation, with respect to some of the things involved in the selec-

POSTSCRIPT

tion and the preparation of such western associates of the Christian enterprise in the East, I am here advancing a set of specifications put quite dogmatically, and without necessary qualifying conditions. I shall use the masculine gender for convenience, but with the emphatic assertion that women are quite as much needed in the villages as are men.

This Christian associate in rural reconstruction will first of all be rural-minded, if possible with a distinct farm background and an experience in farm work. In any event he will love the countryside, exult in country living, have an understanding of country people and complete sympathy with their problems.

In the process of his education he will have studied agriculture to the extent of courses in the application of modern science to the growth of crops and possibly of animals. If he has a hobby such as raising chickens, or keeping bees, or growing vegetables, or cultivating flowers, with his own hands, he is to be congratulated.

He will also have dipped into the realm of the social sciences sufficiently to appreciate some of the technique involved in rural reconstruction; that is, in making the soil-tillers of the world better farmers, better marketers, better co-operators, better citizens.

Indeed he will have pressed this sort of study far enough to have gained a clear notion of a Christian social order, one in which an adequate rural civilization complements an adequate urban civilization. And he will have learned that the practical, effective unit in the architecture of this Christian rural social order is a more Christlike local community.

He will have had such a measure of experience in the disciplines of philosophy and theology, of history and anthropology, of literature and of art, as to appreciate the fact that the drama of the Christian advance in so-called non-Christian lands must be played on a stage the background of which consists of a culture in many ways

very different from his own, but which he must seek to understand; for the setting is indispensable to the play.

He will have gained a sufficient mastery of the field of religious education to go out with the instincts and method of the teacher, and particularly the teacher of the masses; and also to be completely wrapped up in the belief that true religion never thrives in a compartment of its own, but lives only as it becomes a way of life for every man and for every day.

He will have studied somewhat the history and the changing technique of missions, and his mentors will not have minimized the practical difficulties nor glossed the certain discouragements that must be faced in the field.

He will have had at some time and in some manner a personal religious experience, preferably supported by a clearly held theology, or possibly only by an abiding faith and confidence, but nevertheless an experience that has anchored him to the living God, and has burned into his soul the significance of the essential religion of Jesus, both as he served the villagers of Galilee, and as he hung upon the cross.

IV

Once on the field, such things as these will happen:

This recruit will be sent directly to a language school where he will attempt not only to master the language or dialect, but to become orientated into the existing culture of the village people of the type among whom he is to work.

After language school he will serve an apprenticeship in the villages with a more experienced westerner, but chiefly with associates who are nationals. Doubtless he will have some preference, and possibly some measure of special preparation, for a particular type of work such as evangelism, religious education, agriculture, village industry, health, recreation, mass education. If so, he will be allowed to follow this to a degree; but it will be better if he is obliged to try himself out a bit in various lines of ap-

POSTSCRIPT

proach to the main problem. During this period of apprenticeship he will have been studying more or less systematically the cultural backgrounds of the people, but far more obviously he will betray a hunger for facts about all sorts of things relating to the life, work, difficulties, beliefs, fears, hopes, customs, strength, weakness of the men and women and children and youth of the village.

After about five years of this sort of thing there will be a kindly but frank day of judgment. He himself and presumably his wife, who will be partner to the full, must decide whether their life work does or does not lie in the field of oriental rural reconstruction. By the same token both their national and western associates will express their views and their wishes.

If there is a mutual decision that to remain in service is the clear call, then the wise board of control in the homeland will not only permit, but will require a furlough of two years, during which studies will be pursued, in approved institutions, that are designed to undergird the special type of activity which is to be followed on return to the field.

Back again in service, no exigency except temporary and dire emergency will take this man from his specific task. Arrangements will be made with universities, either in the East or in the West, for his continuing education in broad as well as specialized lines. If wise, he will have an intellectual as well as a physical avocation. In his further furloughs he will be repeatedly refreshed by drinking at the fountains that flow in ever-increasing measure from the research and experiences of the masters.

COLOPHON

Christian Enterprise Among Rural People is composed in Linotype Scotch (eleven point, leaded two points). Among the plain modern faces of type, Scotch stands in a class by itself. Its excellently proportioned letters and harmonious color make for easy reading. The firm, incisive downstrokes, beautifully turned serifs, and general crispness are all definite features that make themselves felt but do not obtrude.

The body of the book is printed on seventy pound Mellotex, end sheets are eighty pound White Antique, and the case is made of Saylcom Maroon Cloth stamped in gold Brighten leaf.

DESIGNED, COMPOSED, ELECTRO-
PLATED, PRINTED, AND BOUND BY
THE PARTHENON PRESS,
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE